

Sketch

Many a slip allows Heseltine to shine



Mark Lawson

EVERY theatre-goer knows the wave of deflation, the smell of spoiled outings, that runs through a theatre when the little slip of paper spills out of the programme or the bow-tied stage manager breaks the curtains with the words: "The role of... will be played at this performance by..."

Where the hell have all these politicians gone? Perhaps, as in theatre, taxpayers should have the option of receiving their money back when billed leads fail to appear.

O'Brien (Labour MP for Warwickshire North), who raised the question of Lady Thatcher's speech, due to be delivered last night, in which she opposed a single European currency.

The Deputy Prime Minister replied that both Lady Thatcher and the Prime Minister fought for British interests in Europe. "Each must do it in his own way and his own context," he concluded.

There was something a little tragic about Hezza's early deputising for Major. It was as if a woman had refused to sleep with a man but permitted him a single kiss before kicking him out. Yesterday, though, it was a hell of a kiss.

Peter Pike (Labour MP for Burnley) asked him to reprise his reasons for opposing Thatcher. "As I look back on a long career in public service," replied Hezza, with nicely camp grandeur.

Warmed up, he reached for a prop: a Guardian cutting in which Ken Livingstone (Labour MP for Brent East) expressed mystification about the meaning of the new Blair sound-bite "stakeholder society".

"Mine's a strioan," yelled Dennis Skinner, but what Skinner is to jokes, Hezza is to rhetoric.

"I'll tell you what it means, he roared. "It means that the stakeholders that the Labour Party would be bringing back are... the unions, the single issue pressure groups, the local authorities and co-operatives..."

The Tory backbenchers gave a sitting, but bowling ovation. Real theatre had returned to Question Time. Some of them will have begun to fantasise again about not just a slip in the programme but a change of names on the marquee.

First night

Crackers about maracas

Judith Mackrell

Corazon Flamenco Sadiers Wells

EVER since Massine's Andalusian ballet, Le Tricorne, sent 1920s London flocking to Spanish dance classes, the British have proved susceptible to flamenco.

It may be that our northern souls ache for the kind of passion where men sing deep into the night about betrayal, and women weave erotic spells with their arms. It may be that flamenco is as close to the genuinely exotic as Europe gets.

During the late 1980s, London suffered its most acute bout of Spanish fever. Crowds of cool young women gave up their social lives to learn how to stomp through a serious sevillanas, while their boyfriends hung out in tapas bars.

But the show's second half returns, gloriously, to the old format allowing individuals to sparkle and glow unaccompanied by it. It is dominated by Manuela Carrasco, a big, breathtakingly severe woman who attacks her movements with a violent, even brutal power.

In place of the pretty ladies in mantillas peddled to tourists, the public were shown great artists, who were mostly Gypsies. Dour, dumphy women came on to the stage looking as if they were setting off to market but as soon as they started to dance they trampled demons beneath their feet.

With only a few variations, this show carried off four wildly successful seasons. But

its director, Francisco Sanchez, has obviously decided it is time for a new formula, so the first half of his new production Corazon Flamenco is taken up by a dance drama about illicit love and revenge.

The opening of Noche de Santiago looks promising as traditional bulerias and rumbas are used to establish a village community of gossip.

The couple dancing the rumba are particularly sparky — she all fiery hips and high mocking kicks, he all dandy hauteur. But the married woman and her Gypsy lover at the centre of the plot are revealed far less convincingly.

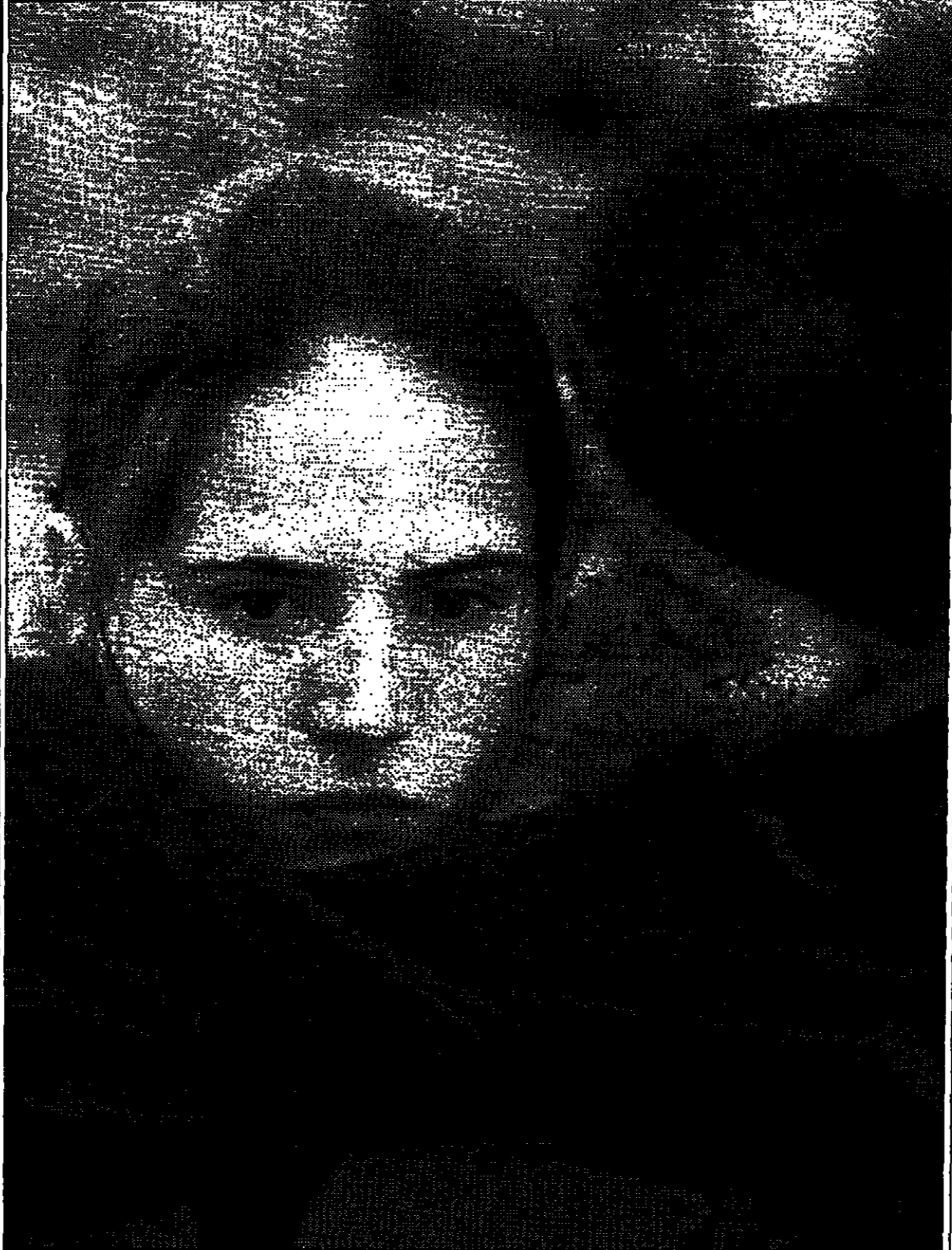
Flamenco may communicate the heat of individual desire but it does not lend itself to the yielding love duet. However passionate their dancing — and Araturo Aguilar particularly performs with a fierce high-strung precision — it takes a little foolish when it is made to express things beyond its range.

But the show's second half returns, gloriously, to the old format allowing individuals to sparkle and glow unaccompanied by it. It is dominated by Manuela Carrasco, a big, breathtakingly severe woman who attacks her movements with a violent, even brutal power.

Towards the end there was a tough attack on "Old Labour" and on Mr Blair whom she has previously praised, "by instinct a man of the left", she said last night before deriding "misty talk about boosting communities and community values" through state action when it should be voluntary.

As for stakeholding, she had delivered the goods, she said. "Reform of the public finances was matched by reform of the trade unions, deregulation and privatisation of industries and a great extension of ownership of houses, shares and savings — quite a lot of stakeholding in fact." It would be a gamble to elect Mr Blair, whatever the polls said, she insisted.

But the bulk of Lady Thatcher's lecture, and its main thrust, was directed towards the internal party battle and the danger of the centre ground for which "One Nation" is a century-old rallying cry.



Anne Pingeot, Mitterrand's mistress, comforts their daughter Mazarine in Jarnac

PHOTOGRAPH: PHILIPPE WOJAZER

France bids adieu as a socialist statesman is laid to rest with pomp and pastoral simplicity

Eyewitness

Alex Duval Smith in Paris

JUST as he would have liked and almost word-for-word as he had planned, Francois Mitterrand yesterday secured his passage from politics to history in an atmosphere loaded with symbols as powerful as they were contradictory.

In a letter accompanying his will, the former socialist president, who died on Monday aged 79, had staged managed his final journey. It would combine pomp and grandeur with the pastoral simplicity he espoused.

At a solemn requiem mass in Notre-Dame cathedral, 2,300 people — including 170 heads of state and government — mourned beneath rising incense smoke pierced by shafts of light. The Archbishop of Paris, Monsignor Jean-Marie Lustiger, presided and a choir sang.

Simultaneously, members of Mitterrand's family and 500 friends attended an identical service in Saint-Pierre, a parish church in Jarnac, his birthplace. Afterwards, the former president was buried in a drab family tomb.

Mitterrand, who died as a result of prostate cancer, had thought of most things — even that his Labrador, Baltic, should travel with his coffin from Paris to Jarnac. But if he had wished to bequeath the image of a great 20th century figure, he needed the unprompted endorsement of another doyen of politics. At Notre-Dame during the Requiem, the imposing figure of the German chancellor, Helmut Kohl, provided it by crying.

And if France is prepared to accept Mitterrand's links with the wartime Vichy regime, it still likes a happy ending. Danielle Mitterrand provided it in Jarnac by being flanked, at the coffin, by her husband's mistress, Anne Pingeot, and their daughter, Mazarine.

But some acrimony seethed beneath the surface, with Le Monde reporting yesterday that Jacques Attali, Mitterrand's adviser who fell foul of him last year because of a book quoting his purported criticisms of aides, had been prevented from paying his respects in the apartment near the Eiffel Tower where he died on Monday.

Passing into history was one thing. But no earthly body could guarantee a passage to Heaven, even for an agnostic whose nickname was "Dieu". In his address, Msgr Lustiger felt "Francois Mitterrand had implied that he believed in the communion of saints".

The Archbishop reminded the congregation that the president's constant companion had been a framed picture of Saint Francis of Assisi. Apart from Prince Charles, from Britain came John Major, Tony Blair, Edward Heath and James Callaghan.

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Threat lifted for asylum seekers

Alan Travis Home Affairs Editor

THE Government lifted the threat of imminent destitution for 13,000 asylum seekers last night but announced that from next month new applicants who fail to make a claim as soon as they arrive in Britain will lose their right to claim benefits.

The Social Security Secretary, Peter Liley, told the Commons he was pressing ahead with his plans despite a highly critical report from the Government's advisory committee which warned yesterday that they were "potentially racially divisive" and would not achieve the claimed savings of £200 million a year.

The announcement represented a U-turn over a policy "designed to smoke out Labour" and which was announced with fanfares at the Conservative Party conference in October.

The Refugee Council and the Churches had made preparations to set up emergency shelters and feeding centres in anticipation of thousands of asylum seekers ending up on the streets when the benefit changes were brought into effect.

The social security advisory committee, chaired by General Sir Thomas Boyd-Carpenter, backed their assessment. "We do not believe that it is acceptable that solution should be sought by put-

Clinton on Hillarygate defensive

Martin Walker and Jonathan Freedland in Washington

THE United States president, Bill Clinton, went before the nation last night to defend his wife Hillary against accusations that she had lied under oath and abused her position as First Lady.

A rare televised press conference was aimed to subject Mr Clinton to a grilling over his wife's veracity on the Whitewater affair and her role in the sacking of White House travel-office staff two years ago.

In recent days Republicans and their conservative allies in the media, who have singled out Mrs Clinton for unusually vitriolic criticism, have successfully revived the Whitewater affair — a disastrous property investment by the Clinton family in Arkansas financed by a bank that later went broke amid allegations of a conflict of interest.

Mr Clinton was the Arkansas governor, and his wife was a member of the law firm that worked for the bank, Madison Guaranty.

But earlier yesterday, Mr Clinton received unexpected support from the star witness before the Republican-controlled Senate hearings into Whitewater.

Richard Massey, a former colleague of Mrs Clinton at the Rose law firm in Arkansas, corroborated her story that she, and not she had initiated and undertaken most of the legal work for the bank at the heart of the affair.

"No evidence, no knowledge, no liability," said Christopher Dodd, a Democratic senator and the party's chairman. He added that the Republican-run committee had withheld from the press and public formal legal reports commissioned by federal regulators which had concluded that the Clintons had no case to answer.

There is nothing to hold these conspiracy theories together other than political or personal enmity against the president and First Lady," Mr Dodd said.

Mr Clinton went on to the offensive as a report in Money magazine claimed that legal bills now running at \$2 million (£1.25 million) a year had put him and his wife "on a collision course with bankruptcy".

Mike McCurry, the White House press secretary, admitted: "They are facing some real financial difficulties, that's true." But more than \$1 million has already been raised by the Clintons' legal defence fund.

Trouble came on another front yesterday as leaked documents on the so-called "Travelgate" affair appeared to confirm that Mrs Clinton had ordered the 1993 purge of White House travel staff, which she has always denied.

"May 16 — Eric Galt, then White House chief of staff, Thomas McLarty — referring to Mrs Clinton — had scribbled in a note taken during a meeting.

The Clintons are accused of sacking the travel staff on trumped-up charges in order to replace them with cronies from Arkansas headed by a second cousin of the president.

This is the second piece of written evidence which flatly contradicts Mrs Clinton's version. Last week a memo by another former White House aide was released revealing that he believed there would be "hell to pay" if he did not carry out her wishes that they be summarily dismissed.

The real drama yesterday came in the senate. A special committee, using the room where the inquiries into President Richard Nixon were held 20 years ago in which Mrs Clinton was herself a junior lawyer — asked a revised version of the classic Watergate question: what did the First Lady know, and when did she know it?

"The American people have a right to know the full facts about Whitewater," said Alfonso D'Amato, the Republican committee chairman, said. But Mr Massey firmly rejected Republican claims that he had ever conspired with the White House or other Rose law firm colleagues to alter his story.

Instead, Mr Massey confirmed most of Mrs Clinton's claims that she had a hands-off role in the legal affairs of the Madison Guaranty bank.

Five held over head's murder

FIVE arrests were made yesterday in connection with the murder of London headmaster Philip Lawrence, and four arrests in connection with the robbery of John Mills, husband of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Barbara Mills. Last night Scotland Yard was refusing to comment on suggestions that the arrests were linked, writes Duncan Campbell.

The five arrested in connection with the murder of Mr Lawrence were being interviewed at five separate central London police stations. The four held in connection with the attack on Mr Mills were being held at Paddington in central London.

In the Lawrence case the five were arrested yesterday morning at different addresses. They were described as being aged 17 and from Holloway, aged 15 from Camden, aged 15 from Crouch Hill, all north London; aged 14 from Harrow Road, west London and aged 16 from central London.

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Health service faces lethal cocktail of problems, BMA chairman warns

Government attacked over bed and staff shortages and community care 'failure'

Chris Millill
Medical Correspondent

A SHORTAGE of hospital beds has combined with staff shortages, a misplaced Government policy on waiting lists and a failure of community care to produce "a potentially lethal cocktail of problems" in the National Health Service, the chairman of the British Medical Association said yesterday.

Dr Sandy Macara revealed that some hospitals had come close to treating patients on the floor after running out of trolleys as well as beds during peak periods of the latest admissions crisis over Christmas and the New Year. One hospital was reduced to treating patients in ambulances parked outside the unit, and many others had cancelled routine surgery to cope with emergency admissions. Some family doctors were spending hours on the telephone trying to get their patients admitted to medical or surgical wards.

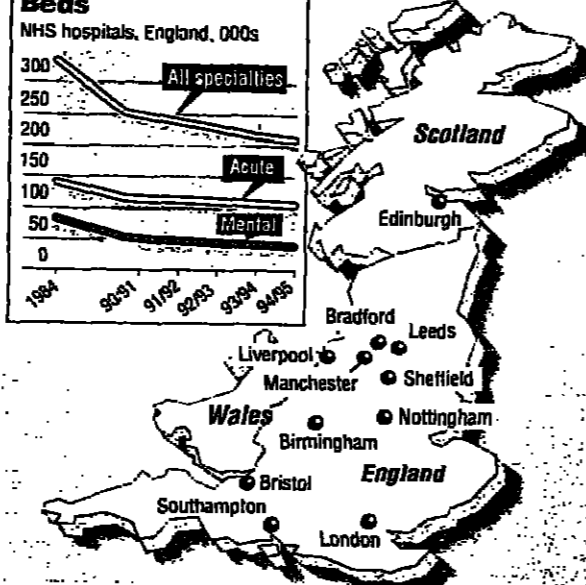
The BMA said a consistent run-down of beds over recent years had left the hospital system unable to cope with seasonal fluctuations in admissions caused by flu, falls, respiratory problems and other winter illnesses. Some units faced staff shortages, so even where beds were available they could not be used through a lack of trained personnel. Many "acute" beds — used for medical and surgical cases — were being blocked by elderly patients or the mentally ill because they could not be sent home due to a lack of care in the community.

In other cases the Government's drive to reduce waiting lists was distorting priorities, so that emergency patients had to wait on trolleys while non-urgent patients had operations in order to meet waiting lists. The BMA at its latest council meeting heard a list of complaints from consultants and GPs who called on the Health Secretary, Stephen Dorrell, to take action "to rectify the severe and prolonged bed crisis in the acute sector".

Bed shortages were highlighted in Scotland, Wales, Bristol, Southampton, Manchester, Leeds, Bradford, Liverpool, Sheffield, Birmingham, Nottingham, London, and other parts of England.

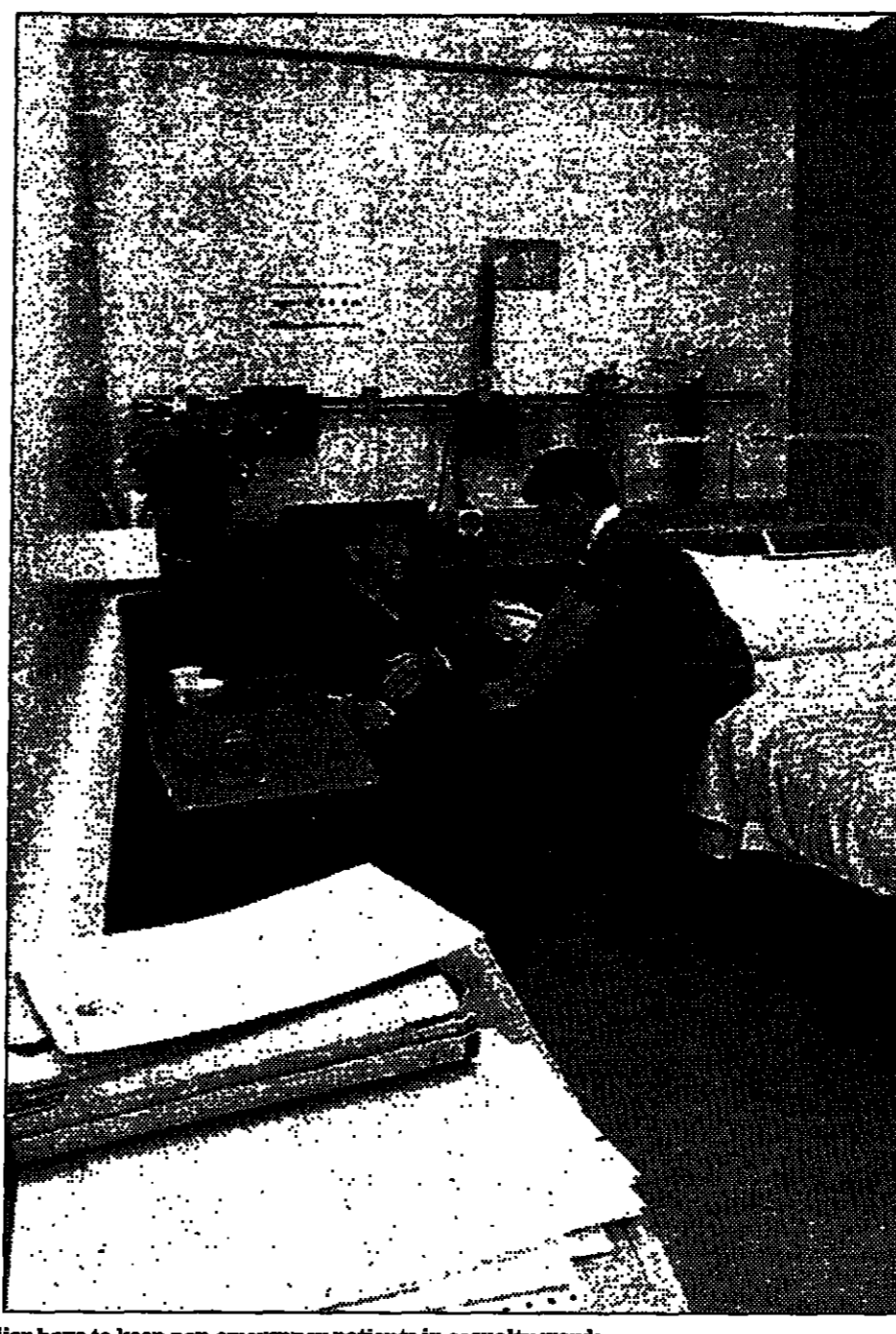
Admissions crisis

Scotland, Wales and many English cities have a beds shortage



The worst cases

- Edinburgh & Southern Scotland**
 - Three hospitals stopped non-emergency operations because of nurse shortages
 - Lothian Health Board reported 20% increase in emergency admissions on previous year
- Queen's University Hospital, Nottingham**
 - Funding problems closed wards and stopped non-emergency operations for three weeks
- South Wales**
 - A&E departments full or shut at four hospitals
 - One GP told no bed available in the whole of South Wales
- Whipps Cross Hospital, East London**
 - Ran out of trolleys one night in the Accident and Emergency Dept
- South West London**
 - 22% increase in admissions to A&E over last year
 - 26 patients on trolleys in one A&E department
 - Patients treated in ambulances at one hospital



'It's quite frightening. So much is happening. You are terrified you will miss something crucial.'

Edward Pilkington

TWO days before the new year, south London experienced heavy rain. That same day, partly as a result, St Helier hospital in Carshalton, Surrey, experienced a deluge. The rain froze, making roads and pavements treacherous. By early morning the hospital's casualty ward had begun to receive a stream of people who had slipped on the ice, spraining muscles and breaking bones.

Creaking under the strain of shortages, hospitals like St Helier have to keep non-emergency patients in casualty wards

PHOTOGRAPH: GARRY WEASER

and some patients were treated in ambulances. Mr Dorrell said there were enough beds, but they needed to be managed effectively. The fall in bed numbers over recent years had happened because modern medicine, with procedures such as day surgery, meant fewer beds were needed.

According to BMA figures, 9,000 acute beds have been closed in England over the past five years, and 31,000 since 1984. The total number of beds dropped from 335,000 in 1984 to 212,000 in 1994/95. Dr Macara said: "There is a shortage of staff because so many youngsters are fed up. There's a disastrous shortfall in community care — there's a serious neglect masquerading as community care. There are not enough resources."

Dr Macara said in the short-term money needed to be found to open more beds, but in the longer term a more fundamental review of bed needs was necessary.

£3bn bonanza for Woolwich savers

Teresa Hunter

MORE than 3 million members of the Woolwich, one of Britain's oldest building societies, will take part in a £3 billion share bonanza next year, giving them a typical windfall of £1,000 each.

The third largest building society and fifth largest mortgage lender yesterday announced plans to become a bank. The decision to float the Woolwich on the stock exchange was taken two days after its new chief executive, Peter Robinson, took control — although it had been discussed for some months.

The society's 3.5 million savers with at least £100 in their accounts and 550,000 borrowers with an outstanding balance of the same on December 31, 1995, will receive a basic distribution of free shares. Savers will receive additional shares based on their balances on a date in the future which will be announced.

The society declined to detail the exact size of any distribution, but said the average member could expect to receive between £500 and £750, with many savers receiving well over £1,000. However, customers with deposit accounts, pension accounts, current accounts, life policies, unit trusts, unsecured loans and general insurance policies will receive nothing.

The 30,000 customers who rushed to cash in on the well-signalled flotation by opening accounts this year will also miss out on the windfall, although the society was unrepentant at denying them a payout. Mr Robinson said: "I have no conscience about not enfranchising carpet-baggers."

He added that account opening activity had increased by a factor of 20 amid rumours that the Woolwich was going to change its status.

The society said catalytic change in the industry left it no alternative but to follow the Abbey National, Halifax, Leeds Permanent, Cheltenham & Gloucester and National & Provincial and abandon its mutual status. Mr Robinson said: "It may seem odd that most major societies are shedding their traditional status which has served them so well for more than 100 years. But a flat housing market combined with oversupply has reduced mortgages to commodities where price is everything."

The Alliance & Leicester is tipped to be the next to convert, but a spokesman said yesterday that it would not be rushed into a decision. Adrian Coles, director general of the Building Societies Association, strongly denied that the Woolwich's move signalled the end of building societies, even though fewer than 50 are expected to survive into the next century.

Mr Coles said: "There will be building societies around for a very long time, and the Woolwich's decision will have no impact on the future of many strong mutuals such as the Nationwide, Derbyshire and Northern Bank."

However, if the Alliance & Leicester follows the Woolwich, then building societies will account for less than a quarter of the mortgage market they once controlled. UBS building society analyst Rob Thomas predicted: "The game is up and societies have only themselves to blame. They wanted to behave like PLCs fattening themselves up with big profits. Now their customers are demanding their share."

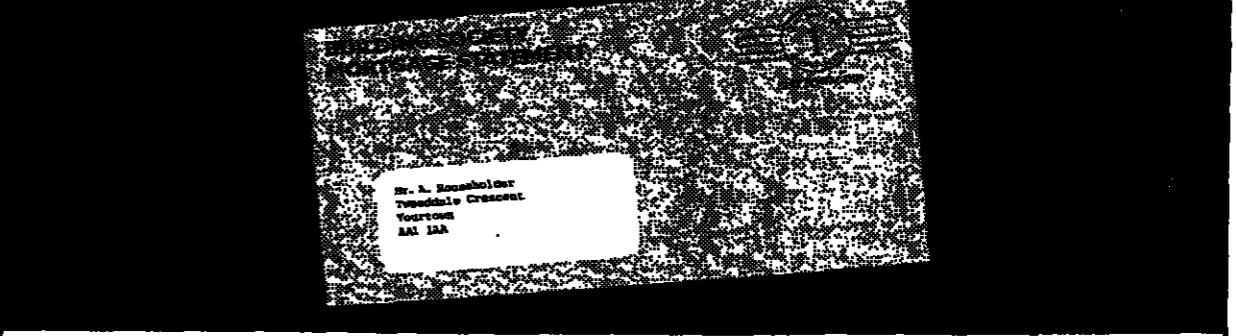
The Woolwich, which already operates lending subsidiaries in France and Italy, said it wished to raise capital through a market flotation to fund further acquisitions at home and abroad.

Alliance tipped to follow Woolwich, Notebook, page 11

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Introduced to the Party by her friend Barbara Follett, Vivienne Westwood has set about breathing new life into New Labour, and her Spring "Stakeholder" collection is already catching on.

Bel Littlejohn page 9

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FROM THE WORLD FOR FEW BOB LESS.

'Our analysis was not wrong . . . the view put about by malcontents as to why the Tories are in trouble is baloney'



No regrets . . . Lady Thatcher dismissed 'no nation' pro-European Conservatism and supported tax and spending cuts

PHOTOGRAPH: DON MUIPHEE

Ex-premier says party is unpopular because the middle class, and those aspiring to join it, are no longer offered the incentives which they expect. Michael White on a keynote speech



Sharing the faith . . . in her speech Lady Thatcher praised by name four leading rightwingers — John Redwood, Michael Portillo, Peter Lilley and Michael Howard

Keep to the right, warns Thatcher

Blair dismissed as 'gut socialist'

LADY Thatcher last night coupled a vindication of her own political career as the woman who changed Britain irreversibly during the 1980s with an unmistakable warning to John Major to stick to Thatcherite fundamentals if he wants to prevent new Labour seizing power at the coming election.

In her first domestic policy speech in Britain since leaving office five years ago, the former prime minister lambasted Tony Blair as an unconstructed socialist — "he is, as his record shows, by instinct a man of the left" — whose gut instincts were for state intervention.

She was also careful to praise Mr Major by name along with gushing support for key rightwingers Michael Portillo, Peter Lilley, John Redwood and Michael Howard. But her passing reference to the Chancellor of the Exchequer — "I welcome his determination to bring public spending down below 40 per cent of GDP" — was coupled with no praise for any minister to the left of Mr Howard.

It eloquently underlined the hostility Lady Thatcher feels towards the "One Nation" Toryism invoked by Major-

ites. At one point in her Keith Joseph Memorial Lecture, she dismissed pro-European "No-Nation Conservatism", and in the core passage of her speech aligned herself with the tax-and-spending-cuts wings of her party. "The Conservative Party has problems not because our analysis has been wrong or our principles faulty. Our difficulties are due to the fact that, in certain limited but important respects, our policies and performance have not lived up to our analysis and principles," she told an audacious audience of invited guests.

"That is why the current idea, put around by some malcontents, that the Conservative Party is in trouble be-

cause it has moved to the right — and that this is what needs to be remedied — is baloney.

"And Denis [Major] might be able to suggest a still more telling description," Lady Thatcher insisted.

In unabashed terms which will delight her admirers and infuriate critics, she continued: "The test is simple. Just ask yourself: is it because the Government has not spent, borrowed and taxed enough that people are discontented? Or is it because we have gone too far towards increasing government spending, borrowing and taxation?"

According to Lady Thatcher, "the answer is obvious. We are unpopular above all because the middle classes, and all those who aspire to join the middle classes, feel that they no longer have the incentives and opportunities they expect from a Conservative government." What she calls malcontents, "socialists of all par-

Poetic reference to Runnymede omits mention of John's fate

John Ezzard

PUDYARD Kipling was not necessarily thinking of Lady Thatcher when he wrote in another poem, *Recessional*:

*Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre.*

But he would not have been deceived by her selective quotation of his slightly more doggerel *Runnymede*. In her onslaught on Euro-federalism, she quoted:

*You mustn't sell, delay, deny
A freeman's right or liberty.
It wakes the stubborn
Englishry.*

We saw 'em roused at Runnymede!
And there they launched in solid line,
And still when Mob or Monarch loys
Too rude a hand on English woves,

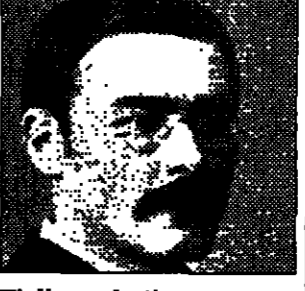
That settled John at Runnymede!

However, she left out the even blunter — in her context — third verse:

*When through our ranks the Barons came,
With little thought of praise or blame
But resolute to play the game,
They lumbered up to Runnymede,
And there they launched in solid line,
The first attack on Right Divine —
The curt, uncompromising
'Sign!'*

There exposed — may be the brute subtext of her lecture: King John's barons as the Tory right, seizing power from a prime minister who has never thought of the greensward of Runnymede as anything but a potential cricket pitch.

Poetry, as Kipling could have warned her, is a medium designed to reveal the truth as well as expose the ridiculous.



Kipling: selective quotes

'Eighties idol' snubbed as Redwood is invited to summit

Jonathan Freedland in Washington

JOHAN Redwood is to join Newt Gingrich in a Washington summit of "revolutionary political leaders" from around the world.

Mr Redwood will be the sole British representative at a January 22 forum convened

by the Progress and Freedom Foundation, a right-wing think-tank allied with the Republican House Speaker.

The event will be the second Washington meeting between Mr Redwood and Mr Gingrich within a few months.

"Their ideas are so similar," said Rick O'Donnell, a spokesman for the founda-

tion. "It's like how Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher were ideologically close — so are Newt and Redwood."

John Major has not been invited because organisers deemed him insufficiently radical.

"He's not thinking dramatically about the 21st century," said Mr O'Donnell.

The foundation also declined to invite Mr Gingrich's ideological idol, Lady Thatcher. "She was the 1980s and Redwood, we believe, is the year 3000," said the spokesman.

The meeting aims to chart a course for global conservatism, in the age of cyberspace and the "knowledge economy."

Opposition set to rescue divorce law shake-up

Rebecca Smithers Political Correspondent

THE unlikely saviour of the Government's plans to shake up the divorce laws appeared in the guise of the Opposition last night, as the shadow Lord Chancellor said he expected the majority of Labour peers to support the reforms.

Lord Irvine of Lairg was backing the new Family Law Bill as it entered its commit-

tee stage in the House of Lords, where it was subjected to a savage attack by Tory peers who fear it will undermine the status of marriage.

His support of the reforms, which will end "quickie" divorces and introduce the concept of "no fault" divorce, was a subtle message that Tory rightwingers opposing the legislation, in the Lords and the Commons, should not count on Labour's support.

Lord Irvine, a close friend of Tony Blair and tipped to be

Pilot schemes will smooth way to matrimony

THE Government is to fund pilot schemes to prepare couples for marriage in an attempt to stem the rising tide of divorces, *writes Chris Dyer.*

The announcement came as the Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay, faced fierce opposition last night from peers and bishops in the debate on his Family Law Bill, which removes the concept of fault from divorce.

A spokeswoman for the Lord Chancellor said he was pledging hundreds of thousands of pounds to try out schemes designed to reduce the number and cost of marriage breakdowns. These would include marriage preparation projects and methods of encouraging couples whose mar-

Sea air fails to agree with Lancashire civil servants

David Hencke Westminster Correspondent

THE most sickness-prone civil servants evidently work at the Land Registry office in Lytham St Anne's, on the Lancashire coast.

On average 15 days a year are lost by every member of staff there — double the number lost in the Land Registry's London offices and more than 50 per cent above national average level in the Civil Service.

A National Audit Office report singles out the Land Registry, which handles property titles, as having the second worst record of sickness leave in government. It is just beaten by driving test examiners, who on average are double the national level.

The report discloses a number of spectacular cases — one staff member had 302 days' sick leave over a six-year period in 81 spells of absence. Other cases included a person with 130 days' sick leave over three years on 32 occasions.

The auditors found that sick leave varied according to region, with Wales, the North-west and the North the worst areas. In addition to the Lytham St Anne's office, high sickness rates were recorded at Swansea, York and Birkenhead.

The report concludes that the Land Registry has improved its record in handling sick leave over the past three years. It puts much of the blame for the big increase on the workload of the registry between 1988 and 1991. The improvement has been helped by new methods of working aimed at making the job less boring.

Altogether five million working days every year are lost in Whitehall departments at an estimated salary cost of £419 million.

Management of Sickness Absence in HM Land Registry: Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, HMSO, £8.15

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Blunkett stakes Labour's claim as 'one-nation' party

Patrick Wintour, Chief Political Correspondent

MARSHALLING all the individual talents of the nation to create social cohesion is at the core of Tony Blair's call for a stakeholder economy, the shadow education and employment secretary, David Blunkett, said yesterday in a speech designed to put further flesh on Labour's "big idea".

Mr Blunkett sought to refute renewed Tory claims that Mr Blair's embrace of the stakeholder society, in a speech in Singapore on Monday, revealed that Labour intended to hand back power to the corporatist institutions, notably the TUC.

In a speech in Nottingham, Mr Blunkett made no reference to the unions, but instead argued that Mr Blair's speech showed that Labour

was the only one nation party — "One nation with higher education standards for every child, not just an elite few. One nation where welfare to work policies give everybody the opportunity to be self-reliant".

He argued that Labour, unlike the Tories, recognised that "we either tackle the issue of social exclusion and a deeply divided society, or we preside over the disintegration of the fabric of community or society."

"Social cohesion and a sense of identity and belonging are crucial in a society which is not only civilised but which works in the interests of all".

Concern for social cohesion, in which everyone has a stake in the society, would be "of benefit to the individual and to society as a whole".

But Labour's concern for social cohesion did not imply that it underestimated the implications of information technology, globalisation or the changing nature of the labour market.

Full employment, he argued, was only possible if Britain again became a competitive nation by investing in its workforce and offering new learning opportunities.

"To achieve our goals, however, we need a quantum leap — firstly in the appreciation of the enormity of the problems facing us, and secondly in breaking down old thinking and outdated mechanisms for achieving our objectives."

He called for an end to the bamboo curtains between government spending, so that the current sum spent on keeping people on the dole queue or in poverty was spent in educating the workforce. In particular, he praised local government initiatives, including one undertaken by

informative:

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Princess sides with Labour on care policy

Patrick Wintour, Chief Political Correspondent

THE Princess of Wales created fresh political controversy yesterday when she appeared to side with two Labour MPs who attacked the Government's treatment of young people leaving care.

Paul Flynn, MP for Newport West, sent the princess a copy of the Hansard report of a Commons debate in which he and a colleague, David Hinchliffe, MP for Wakefield, accused ministers of "cold cynicism" for cutting the "paltry" benefits payments made to impoverished young people.

Her private secretary, Patrick Jephson, replied that the princess's sentiments were "neatly summed up" by comments in the same debate by a third Labour MP, Frank Cook, and describing the speeches by Mr Flynn and Mr Hinchliffe as "astoundingly complete, compassionate and considerate".

Mr Jephson also wrote that the princess had asked him to thank Mr Flynn for taking the trouble to write and to send her "warm good wishes".

He added: "As you know, Her Royal Highness takes a keen interest in the subject of your speech, from which she

gained further valuable evidence of the difficulties faced by so many vulnerable young people.

Mr Flynn commented last night: "I am delighted to have the princess's support as it will help to bring attention to this neglected group of young people."

In his speech, Mr Hinchliffe attacked government proposals to introduce "boot camps" for young offenders.

"I become angry when I hear the latest proposals from the Home Office — the tough approach, going back to the short sharp shock treatment that was such a miserable failure," he said.

Tory MPs have already been angered by a recent speech by the princess in which she appeared to attack the Government's homelessness record. The latest episode will add to Tory qualms about granting her wish of a prominent diplomatic role abroad.

A Buckingham Palace spokesman said the princess's secretary had simply sent the MP a polite acknowledgment without any intention of involving her in a political debate.

However, one Tory MP, Peter Luff, said the best way the princess could help young people was by doing "something more effective to keep her own family together".



Pole-bound... The team selected to walk to the magnetic North Pole carry their route map to the New North Pole pub in Kensington, west London, yesterday. They leave in April on the 350-mile charity walk from Resolute Bay in Canada, co-led by David Hempleman-Adams, the first Briton to walk solo and unsupported to the South Pole. PHOTOGRAPH: TOM JENKINS

Hostage ploy in £5m post office raid

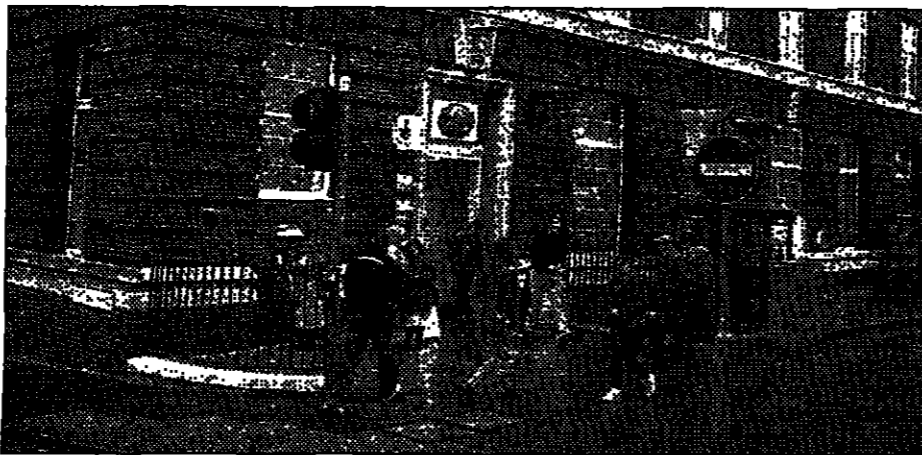
Armed gang frightens worker into opening door for robbery

Duncan Campbell
Crime Correspondent

ARMED robbers yesterday stole up to £5 million by convincing a post office worker they had taken his wife and children hostage. Police were last night hunting a gang of four men armed with shotguns and a handgun.

The robbery began at 4.40pm on Wednesday when a counter staff worker on a break from the Cambridge Road post office in the centre of Hastings, East Sussex, was approached in the street by a man.

The worker was shown a photograph of his own wife and children and was told they had been taken hostage and were being held by associates. He was told to co-oper-



The Hastings post office from where an armed gang stole £5 million. PHOTOGRAPH: INEEL BOWLES

ate with the robbery if he did not want them harmed.

At 8.10pm, the worker, having unsuccessfully tried to contact his wife, admitted four balaclava-clad robbers to the post office. Two were armed with shotguns and a third with a handgun. Three members of staff were bound, two of them with handcuffs. Money intended for pen-

sions and social security payments was then seized. It is believed up to £5 million could have been taken. Hastings has a lot of pensioners, unemployed people and single parents.

The robbers left in a light-coloured Luton van after talking the staff that an associate still had the family held hostage. A member of staff man-

aged to raise the alarm and police arrived to find them all unharmed.

Police mounted an armed operation on the post office worker's home but the family were found safe and well and unaware of any attempt to contact them.

Detective Superintendent Paul Westwood of Sussex police said the post office

worker had been "understandably terrified" into co-operating with the robbers. "The guns certainly looked real to the staff frightened who were extremely frightened by what happened," he said.

The man who made the initial approach was described as aged between 30 and 35, about 5ft 11in to 6ft tall, stocky with short dark hair under a plain red baseball cap. He had a darkish complexion and was clean shaven. It is not clear if he was a member of the gang that carried out the actual raid.

One robber was described as being in his 30s, of stocky build and with ginger eyebrows. The robber carrying the handgun was said to be 5ft 8in tall, of medium build and wearing a black bomber jacket. He was wearing a pi-

lot's flying hat with flaps over the ears and a peak.

Police are anxious to trace the Luton van and any witnesses to the raid, which took place when many people were in the area. Security video cameras are being studied.

Armed robberies in the London area have fallen to a 10-year low, according to figures published yesterday. Last year, 597 armed robberies were recorded in the capital — a 12 per cent fall compared with the 1994 total of 679 offences — and well down on the 1988 total of 836.

Commander Roy Ramm, head of Scotland Yard's organised crime group, said the figures were a tribute to the efforts of his officers. "These crimes have been driven down by the sheer hard work and detective skills of Flying Squad officers," he said.

Holloway inmate chained in labour may sue Howard

Alan Travis
Home Affairs Editor

ANNETTE, the Holloway prisoner kept in chains while in hospital to give birth, may sue the Home Secretary.

She is expected to meet supporters and legal advisers today to decide whether to launch a legal action against Michael Howard.

Annette's supporters believe that her letters describing the humiliation and misery she suffered during her pregnancy give strong grounds for launching a case for assault and battery — or for "degrading and inhumane punishment" in the European courts. One avenue being explored is for her to sue Mr Howard for personal injury compensation.

Simon Creighton, spokes-

man for the Prisoners' Advice Service said that based on the published evidence there could be several courses of legal action open to her.

The Prison Reform Trust said it knew of three other recent cases in which seriously ill Holloway prisoners were chained during hospital visits. One woman was receiving chemotherapy for cancer, the second had dysentery and the third pleurisy.

A Prison Service spokeswoman said a risk assessment was carried out on all prisoners before hospital treatment. It determined whether they went with only an escort and whether they needed to be chained or handcuffed. In all cases restraints were removed once treatment began.

She said a prisoner receiving chemotherapy recently escaped with help from an armed accomplice.

'Shambles' halts bypass work

Alex Bellis

THE leader of Newbury council yesterday described attempts to start building the town's bypass as "a shambles" after work was suspended for the third day in a row.

Keith Lock, a Liberal Democrat, called for more security guards and a heavier police presence to stop protesters from disrupting construction. Work was abandoned yesterday after two hours when 30 people put themselves in front of a digger.

Mr Lock said: "Something has got to be done. The whole operation has been pretty ineffective. The contractors may have to change their tactics. I think in the end police may have to take a stronger line."

He added that anger was growing in Newbury at the perceived incompetence of the road builders. After three days of work on the £100 million project, only about 50 of the 10,000 trees on the nine mile route have been uprooted.

Pressure is mounting on Blackwells, the site clearers contracted by the Highways Agency, as they are working on a two months' deadline — a European Union directive on bird habitats bans felling trees during the breeding season from mid-March to August.

The cat and mouse game between protesters and contractors shifted yesterday to the northern end of the bypass, where a digger moved in just before dawn. It was spotted about an hour later and by 8am protesters were arriving

in dribs and drabs. At least a dozen ran through a line of security guards, causing some injuries, and blocked the digger. At 9.45am work was suspended.

John Chapman of Mott MacDonald, the company supervising the digging, said: "We were able to work safely for a period of time. We have cleared a number of trees. It was a joint decision between the contractors and ourselves to stop in the interests of safety."

Protesters and legal observers are pleased, and a little surprised, by the largely peaceful nature of the demonstration so far.

Simon Festing, of Friends of the Earth, said: "We have been confrontational, but not violent. Most of the injuries have been accidents from people slipping."

This week's incidents have also marked a turning point in attitudes to security guards, and in particular, to the police, who have gone out of their way to appear impartial. "We are praising the police conduct," said Mr Festing.

But he added that he was expecting the battle to become fiercer in the weeks to come.

"Things have got to change. We are working on the strategy of being more pro-active, and I am sure the contractors will be adapting their tactics. There must be a time when they try a serious attempt to get going."

A spokesman for the Highways Agency said: "The contractor has been in position for not that long. He is still mobilising his troops. There is no loss of face."

Club 18-30 goes for the big tease

Michael Ellison on the new campaign by controversial holiday company

HOARDINGS were being plastered yesterday with advertisements aimed at appealing to the basest instincts of Britain's youth.

"Meet pleasant youngsters and chit-chat about popular music!" is the enticing prospect offered by one. "Jolly japes, sunny skies and friendly folk!" is the threat contained in another. A third insists: "Put on your trendiest clothes and dance to the disco beat!"

Club 18-30 seemed to have taken to heart the response to last year's campaign to inform people of a certain age and an "adventurous" disposition about its holiday offers.

Then, its posters showed a man in boxer shorts under the heading: Girls, Can We Interest You In A Package Holiday? The Advertising Standards Authority said it was "offensive and irresponsible" and banned the campaign.

This time the firm and its advertising agency, Saatchi & Saatchi, devised an apparently more anodyne approach.

But a line at the bottom of the new posters hints it has not lost its touch entirely. "For our real advertisements see Sky magazine, Loaded, Company and selected cinemas."

The February editions of Sky (readership: young, mixed, mostly gay), Loaded (youngish, lads) and Company (young, sex-obsessed, girls) reveal the true intentions of the £450,000 mission to inform.

One says: "Holiday forecast: Damp, followed by wet patches." The next goes for the cryptic approach with: "Gobble, gobble." Others say: "One swallow doesn't make a summer" and: "Something deep inside her said she'd come again."

Becky Impey, Club 18-30's marketing manager, said: "I think it's dead clever and it will appeal to our audience. The average age of our people is 22...

They're interested in entertainment, clothes and music. Our holidays are like a fortnight of Saturday nights and for lots of people that means drinking and meeting people of the opposite sex." The company sold 100,000 holidays last year, priced between £129 and £500.

Dominic Mills, editor of Campaign, the advertising industry magazine, said: "It's very difficult to get your message noticed and you either have to shout louder, which is what they probably did last year indiscriminately, or they use the posters as a tease, which is quite clever."

Grahame Fowler, the standards authority's spokesman, said: "Their cheeky or sleazy innuendo is restricted to titles whose readers wouldn't be offended, but that's not to say they're acceptable. If the ASA receives a high body of complaints, we'll act to have them withdrawn."

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'Only passivity is dishonourable'

In the first of a series of reports focusing on the untold stories and hidden calamities of the war in the former Yugoslavia, **Ed Vulliamy** talks to retired French general Philippe Morillon, one-time United Nations commander in Sarajevo and of Nato's Rapid Reaction Force — a man who, as he says, left his heart in the destroyed safe haven of Srebrenica



Man of action... General Morillon's stand in defending Srebrenica won respect but was ultimately futile. Supporting players in the general's drama included (top to bottom) Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Colonel Bob Stewart, General George Joulwan

BOSNIA The SECRET War

ON THE very day that the peace treaty ending Bosnia's war was signed in Paris, last December 14, one of the more flamboyant characters to emerge from the carnage ended his own distinguished career as a soldier.

The figure of General Philippe Morillon had been etched into Bosnian history since his arrival in the enclave of Srebrenica, during the first bloody debacle in that town, which led to its subsequent, perverse designation as a "safe area" in spring 1993. He became an overnight hero; the main street was renamed in his honour.

The following July, Gen Morillon concluded his term as United Nations commander in Sarajevo with a lunch at his sandbagged residence. Richard and caviar were served, and in deep, De Gaulle-esque tones, Gen Morillon warned that only a decisive show of force from the West could forge a peace, otherwise Bosnia would become "a series of Gaza strips, ruled through fear". That show of force was still two more years away.

Today, speaking to the Guardian in his first important interview since retirement, Gen Morillon is harshly critical of the UN mandate in Bosnia which he dismisses as a "a mandate of angelism — an illusion that the mere presence of UN soldiers with blue helmets and the blue flag would help to prevent the explosion." His men's rules of engagement were "a farce".

Gen Morillon is by far the highest-ranking military commander to utter such views. And in the interview, he reveals his own efforts to carve a role for Nato through "strictly unofficial" contacts with alliance commanders.

Gen Morillon also describes for the first time his role as a guiding hand behind the deployment last summer of the Rapid Reaction Force, which, he confesses, he personally ordered to tear up its restrictive UN mandate and attack the Serbs — an escalation of the UN's military role that led directly to Nato intervention last autumn and the Dayton agreement.

Gen Morillon also says that the Serbian president, Slobodan Milosevic, confirmed to him at the time that the army of Serbia proper was fighting in Bosnia, in defiance of undertakings given to the international community.

Gen Morillon, a veteran of Algeria in the early 1960s, was a natural choice for a role in the UN's Balkan effort. He had spent two years with the Yugoslav army as an envoy from the French defence ministry, and knew many of its senior officers when it split into Croat, Bosnian and — mainly — Serbian columns.

In October 1991, Gen Morillon was included in a secret seminar held in Metz by senior officers from the armed forces of the Western European Union, gathered to consider options for Croatia. The two-week session's recommendation to the European Community and UN was for a "rapid reaction force", equipped with attack helicopters and tanks, and with a mandate to "assert its authority" and hold the ravaging of former Yugoslavia in check through military force.

Gen Morillon was an enthusiastic proponent of the report, but it was discarded and buried.

Instead, Gen Morillon found himself second-in-command to the Egyptian general Satish Nambiar at the UN Protection Force (Unprofor) headquarters in Sarajevo, chosen for its equidistance between Zagreb and Belgrade. Gen Morillon was convinced

that "something totally different from traditional UN peacekeeping" was required.

When the Bosnian hurricane began to blow, the Sarajevo team was faced with a decision either to evacuate or expand the mandate. "I said we must have a mandate for Bosnia... We were reacting blow by blow, without sufficient liaison with New York or the Community or even each other." The Unprofor HQ was moved from Sarajevo. Gen Morillon returned to the Bosnian capital in August 1992, with a mandate to open the airport and secure the humanitarian aid bridge to Split. He was among those

urging a broader brief to cover the whole of Bosnia. The outcome was, he says, "not so bad — deliver humanitarian aid while establishing the practical conditions of the (Vance-Owen) peace plan".

But, he says, "there was a confusion of aims, between two ideas: we had to be impartial, and I was impartial. But not neutral. They are not the same thing. My motto is 'only passivity is dishonourable' — the way I understood my mission was to oppose everything to do with ethnic cleansing. We could mediate, but we had to be resolutely opposed to the perpetrators of ethnic cleansing. New York's understanding was the spirit of our mission, the illusion that we could remain passive."

Immediately, a rift opened between Gen Morillon's ambitions on the ground, and those of the UN "angelists" making policy in Zagreb and New York. The disagreement was fundamental, over who the "Protection Force" was in Bosnia to protect.

"The idea," says Gen Morillon, "that we were only there to protect ourselves, our soldiers, was unacceptable to me. This was the reason I had so many crises of anger — I was angry with people talking to me about the mandate all the time. We wanted nothing to do with the mandate, but with the spirit of our mission — which was to protect the population. To achieve that, we had to be able to use force against anyone denying or even questioning our freedom of action."

"It was my permanent intention we have to use force. And that is the reason I was so angry when, after my departure, authorisation was given to every side to control our convoys. If you accept such control, you have no role to play, and should pull out."

The UN Security Council's

the town, but it was not what he regarded as the solution. "As far as I was concerned, it was a temporary expedient to protect the town until the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan. For Srebrenica to become an Indian reservation for two-and-a-half years was absolutely not what I had in mind."

Gen Morillon had learned early on who his main adversary would be. Upon taking command in Sarajevo, he spawped a cunning scheme to break the siege: to establish Unprofor's headquarters in the Serb-held suburb of Ilidza. Ilidza, he says, "was the gateway to Sarajevo, key to the city. I did not want, the airport, I wanted Ilidza."

It was here that the Serbs were later to erect roadblocks which closed the tarmac air route into the capital from Split, Mostar and the west, thereby tying the noose.

Gen Morillon tempted and baited the Bosnian Serb president, Radovan Karadzic, with the idea of quartering Unprofor in a Serbian neigh-

bourhood, and convinced him. The mayor of Ilidza was delighted at the prospect of the hard currency following in Unprofor's slipstream. But the plan was quashed by the one man who saw through it: Gen Mladic.

"It was constant arm-wrestling with Mladic," says Gen Morillon. "I once told him to remember that Napoleon ended up on the isle of Elba. He laughed."

Such was Gen Mladic's authority, says Gen Morillon, that President Milosevic himself was a hostage to the Bosnian Serb general. "He was his prisoner, and remained so until the summer of 1995."

Gen Mladic enjoyed the loyalty of not just the Bosnian Serbs but the whole Serbian army, Gen Morillon says. "So the Serbian army was definitely fighting in Bosnia, for all Mr Milosevic's undertakings about the Drina blockade that would throttle his Bosnian Serb brothers?"

"When I went to see Milosevic," says Gen Morillon, "I spoke to him about this. He was obliged to admit to me that they were involved; he couldn't deny that to me. The Serbian army was in there until May 1995."

This is the first testimony of a confession by President Milosevic that his own troops were so engaged.

By the time Gen Morillon left Sarajevo in 1993, he says, "I felt the threat of powerlessness" in the UN mission. He does not single out individuals for blame, but refers to "Zagreb" and "New York", the operation's political and diplomatic nerve-centres, his "defining moment" of 1993, and the late secretary-general, Manfred Woerner.

Gen Morillon came to believe that "so long as Washington was not involved in a common action, there could be no solution. It should have been possible to do this as the UN and as Europe. But the end, I share the US position with the exception that I did not agree that the need for us to act powerfully against the Serbs automatically meant support for (Bosnian president Alija) Izetbegovic or (Croatian president Franjo) Tudman. We were agreed on the means."

Since leaving Sarajevo, Gen Morillon has crossed the Atlantic 10 times to lobby the Pentagon, Vice-President Al Gore, the Senate majority leader, Bob Dole, and a host of officials and congressmen in favour of a resolute line. His main ally, pivotal to winning over the Clinton administration, was the navy's new chief of staff, Admiral Jim Border.

Gen Morillon was a pilot in Brittany, with a pilot's licence in Versailles, his possessions, notes and medals still packed in boxes. He is about to start work on two books: one with the splendidly Young Officer's title *Letter to a Pilot*, and another about one of "those very few things in life that hit you here (he points to his heart) and that you will never forget" — the story of Srebrenica.

'It was constant arm-wrestling with Mladic. I once told him to remember that Napoleon ended up on the isle of Elba. He laughed'

Gen Morillon also says that the Serbian president, Slobodan Milosevic, confirmed to him at the time that the army of Serbia proper was fighting in Bosnia, in defiance of undertakings given to the international community.

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World news in brief

Papandreou 'may resign' after summoning president
Greece's critically ill prime minister, Andreas Papandreou, has asked the government spokesman to meet the president, leading to speculation that he may agree to step down. *writes Helena Smith in Athens.*

It was a surprise even to Mr Papandreou's own socialist party when the spokesman announced yesterday that the ailing leader, who has been in intensive care since November 20, had summoned President Costis Stephanopoulos to his bedside. Officials said the meeting would probably take place this weekend.

The government had earlier survived a vote of confidence tabled by the opposition, which said the prime minister's prolonged illness had left the country leaderless.

Under Greek law, Mr Papandreou, aged 75, who has been attached to life support machines, can only be replaced if he resigns. Experts from the United States, flown in to give the prime minister physiotherapy and speech classes, said yesterday his health was improving.

Peru jails US woman for life
A Peruvian military court yesterday sentenced an American woman to life imprisonment for aiding Marxist guerrillas, her lawyer said.

Grimaldo Achabui said Lori Helene Berenson, aged 26, from New York was convicted of treason for assisting the pro-Cuban Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement. — Reuter.

Charges imminent
The prosecution in a Spanish supreme court inquiry into allegations that the former interior minister, Jose Barrionuevo, backed a "dirty war" against Basque separatists

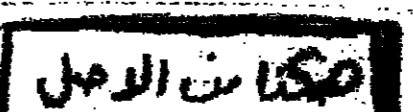
yesterday asked for bail — apparent confirmation that he will be formally charged, *writes Adela Gooch in Madrid.*

Italian PM 'quits'
The Italian prime minister, Lamberto Dini, announced his resignation yesterday, opening the way for parliament to choose between a snap general election or a new government to enact key reforms. — Reuter.

Massacre arrests
Four Mexican state officials and 17 policemen have been arrested on suspicion of involvement in the June 26 massacre of 17 unarmed peasants in Guaymas state, *writes Phil Gunston in Mexico City.* Ten other members of the state police are already in jail.

Journalist bailed
Paul Adams, the Financial Times correspondent detained by in Nigeria for a week, has been freed on bail, diplomats said. Mr Adams was arrested in Ogoniland and charged with possessing seditious material. — Reuter.

Cousteau farewell
Jacques-Yves Cousteau's ocean research ship, the *Calypso*, in which the French oceanographer, aged 85, has toured the world since 1950, has sunk in shallow waters off Singapore, a spokeswoman for the port authority said yesterday. — Reuter.



The Wolf, the Bear, and the hostages in between

SALMAN RADUYEV'S eyes twinkled with good humour, unshakable confidence in the righteousness of his deeds on earth, and absolute certainty of a martyr's honour, if need be, in heaven.

The Chechen rebel leader known as the Lone Wolf, whose motley band of fighters is holding the night of an outraged Russia at bay, came to the village yesterday to the yard of the little house he has commandeered in this village like a proud local celebrity delighted by the attention and feeling himself worthy of it. Two small children played nearby.

Though some of the fighters around him wore black masks, his face was lit only by his long red beard and his black woolly hat wrapped in a green band bearing the Arabic words: "There is no God but God, and Mohammed is his Prophet."

A few yards away lay a reminder that Mr Raduyev is bargaining with Russia for his life, the lives of his 150 fighters and the lives of as many as 160 hostages. Covered in velvet cloth were the bodies of three of his men, killed in the fighting in the Dagestani town of Kizlyar. Tuesday when his band seized the hospital and 2,000 captives.

"If Russia does not want a peaceful outcome, we are ready," he said. "We are soldiers. We do not care how we die."

President Boris Yeltsin, in Paris for the memorial service for Francois Mitterrand, made a conciliatory gesture, saying: "As soon as they agree to not using weapons we will withdraw our troops. Only the police will remain to maintain public order."



'We are soldiers. We do not care how we die'
James Meek meets the Chechen 'Lone Wolf' (left) holding hostages as Russian troops surround the village of Pervomayskaya

Russian helicopters flying with guns and rockets clattered low over the village as Mr Raduyev spoke.

In the snow-covered fields beyond, Russian armoured troop carriers dipped and reared in and out of irrigation ditches as they struggled for vantage points before darkness fell.

Yet even yesterday afternoon it was possible to walk unchallenged into Pervomayskaya along an open road.

Mr Raduyev, son-in-law of the Chechen separatist leader General Dzhokhar Dudayev, said his group had originally planned to attack the military airfield in Kizlyar, because they believed a large consignment of artillery rockets for use in Chechnya was to be unloaded there.

Taking the hospital was a reserve plan they put into effect when a number of fighters were badly wounded and needed surgery. The Chechens released most of their hospital captives on Wednesday morning after reaching, as they thought, a deal guaranteeing them safe passage to Chechnya, after which they would release the rest.

But according to Mr Raduyev the convoy of buses carrying them and their hostages, including an unspecified number of women and children, was fired on with rockets from a Russian helicopter just as it was leaving Pervomayskaya, only a few hundred yards from the Chechen border.

The Chechens ordered the convoy to turn back and they quickly took over the village, capturing 37 interior ministry soldiers and an arsenal of weapons. Most of the 500 or so villagers fled.

The hostages have been dispersed among the village houses, making a successful attempt to free them by force virtually impossible.

Mr Raduyev said he was prepared to free the interior ministry troops and even return the weapons they had

captured from them, but would not leave Pervomayskaya without cast-iron guarantees of a safe passage back to the Chechen mountains.

These guarantees would have to be living ones, he said — not just the hostages from Kizlyar but Russian officials, foreign journalists and representatives of the Red Cross and Médecins sans Frontières as human shields.

He made no mention of a threat to begin shooting hostages.

"We have proposed a solution. We don't want to destroy this village. We don't want the hostages to be hurt. We don't want Dagestan to be drawn into the conflict.

"If they want to save the lives of these people, then they can, but we need hard guarantees."

Mr Raduyev is very like his compatriot Shamil Basayev, who led the earlier Chechen hospital raid on Budyonovsk last year: the same bravado, the same easy flow of self-justifying, mythologising north Caucasian rhetoric.

"We are ready to offer active opposition," he said. "Our situation is considerably more advantageous than the Russians': we hold the village and they are in the open fields."



Armed to the teeth... Chechen fighters check their weapons as they prepare to make a stand in the village of Pervomayskaya in Dagestan

US digs up its fortress Europe

Reuter in Gainesville, Florida

A RCHAEOLOGISTS in Florida believe they have found a fort which protected the first successful European colony in the territory of the future United States.

A triangular moat, burned timbers, pottery and musket shot were found in 1994 in the grounds of an old Spanish mission in St Augustine, Florida.

Kathleen Deagan, of the University of Florida, said researchers were confident the finds came from an early fort of Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, who established the colony of St Augustine, the oldest US city, in 1565. The fort was later burned down.

"It's an exciting discovery for us because it's the earliest European site within the first European town in the US," she said.

Researchers hope the ruins will yield clues to why the settlement survived when many other fledgling colonies failed.

"My personal speculation is that the people of St Augustine... used a lot of American Indian materials," Ms Deagan said.

Polish PM and the KGB man 'just good friends'

Matthew Brzezinski in Warsaw

HIS Soviet "minders" reportedly gave him the code name Olin and beamed like proud parents as their prize mole rose steadily to prominence and power in the Polish government. They whooped with joy after his promotion to one of the highest posts in the land. Then last July in Majorca, disaster struck.

The holidaying former KGB colonel, Vladimir Alganov, apparently opened the door of his hotel suite to find himself face to face with the Polish premier, a living legend among cold war warriors. His sudden appearance could only spell trouble.

In the old days, the two had worked for the same side. In 1966, the KGB even arranged for a spy swap to get Mr Zacharski out of a US jail, where he was serving life for stealing Patriot missile blueprints. But relations between the former allies had since turned sour. While Warsaw was queuing impatiently for Nato membership, Moscow threatened it with nuclear weapons if it joined.

"We know about Olin," Mr Zacharski allegedly said. He then accused the Russian, a diplomat in Warsaw for more than 10 years and now manager of a business there, of "running" the mole.

All this is the former KGB man's version, however. Mr

Zacharski, still reportedly a member of the Polish secret service, has said nothing.

There was no hint of Olin's identity until three days before Lech Walesa relinquished the presidency to the reformed communist Aleksander Kwasniewski on December 23.

A stunned parliament was told that Moscow's man was none other than President Kwasniewski's long-time party colleague — the prime minister. Poland has still not recovered from the shock.

"Prime minister Jozef Oleksy knowingly conveyed information and documents, some classified, to foreign intelligence officers," said Andrzej Milczanowski, minister of internal affairs, a Walesa ally. "The activities dated from 1982 through to 1985."

Mr Oleksy has been prime minister since 1993, leading a coalition of reformed communists and peasants.

The Russians screamed that he had been framed. Mr Oleksy screamed even louder, accusing Walesa loyalists of "dirty provocations" and seeking to revenge his poll defeat.

Colonel Alganov materialised at a hastily convened press conference in Moscow, where he said that he knew Mr Oleksy, but they were just "good friends". No sensitive matters had been raised during their hunting trips together, he added.

Russia's newly appointed

spymaster, General Vyacheslav Trubnikov, also suddenly felt the urge to talk to the media. The affair was a provocation and the allegations were unsubstantiated, he told a Polish journalist.

No proof of the charges has yet been made public. Yesterday, Poland's counter-intelligence service turned over crucial evidence, apparently including incriminating audio and videotapes, to military prosecutors, who will decide next week whether a case should be made against the prime minister, who is on holiday.

President Kwasniewski yesterday backed his embattled prime minister, telling a Paris press conference he had full confidence in him. "I have no reason not to have confidence in him."

The country has been plunged into a frenzy of conspiracy. Many are convinced of Mr Oleksy's guilt, but some say Mr Walesa is framing him. Others claim the Russians fabricated the scandal to discredit and derail Poland's entry into Nato.

Another theory is that the CIA is behind the affair. Meanwhile, the truth could get fuzziest because the secret service is in chaos.

Wholesale changes in the service and the ministry it reports to have been made recently, with Mr Oleksy making key appointments. Last week, the counter-intelligence chief quit, accusing the prime minister of a cover-up.

Japan ends 19-month socialist hiccup

Kevin Rafferty in Tokyo

The chain-smoking nationalist Ryutaro Hashimoto easily defeated his great rival Ichiro Ozawa yesterday to become Japan's prime minister. The new leader, heading a three-party coalition of conservatives and socialists, promised an administration of "creativity and change", but Mr Ozawa immediately dismissed it as a "back-passing government".

Mr Hashimoto's election in parliament, by 252 votes to 187, restored power to the conservative Liberal Democratic Party after only 19 months.

Until its 1993 defeat, the LDP had enjoyed a 58-year stranglehold on power, with the socialists in opposition. Now the two are allies.

The new prime minister named a cabinet in which he was the only survivor of the government of his socialist predecessor, Tomichi Murayama, who resigned last week.

The only woman member is Ritsuko Nagai, a non-politician who becomes justice minister.

The key finance portfolio goes to the secretary-general of the Socialist Party, Wataru Kubo — aged 66 and with no previous ministerial experi-

ence. His first task will be to solve the problem of the huge, housing loan companies which are on the verge of bankruptcy, with potential bad debts of 10,000 billion yen (662 billion). Unless he can mop up their bad debts, Japan's economic growth will be threatened.

Mr Hashimoto, the fourth prime minister in the two and a half years since the last general election, won his international spurs last year in tough talks with the United States on car imports.

His main task is to prepare the LDP and government for a new election under more democratic and "clean" rules.

Who'd have thought it — a Brit awards that isn't clogged up with Elton 'n' Rod and recognises there is room for improvement...

Caroline Sullivan

Review page 8

THE B&Q BIG SALE

HURRY - KITCHEN OFFERS END 8pm MON 22nd JAN

1/3 OFF SELECTED KITCHENS

Offer available while stocks last on Camberley (shown), Ashley, Sherburn, Craftsman Honey, Craftsman Cognac, Chaucer, Marlowe, Rossett, Shelley, Dryden, Huckleberry, Delille, Valery, Charmot and Moliere kitchens.

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| | |
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| 2 1000mm HIGHLINE BASE/SINK UNIT | 6 900mm WALL UNIT |
| 3 1000mm HIGHLINE BASE CORNER UNIT | 7 1000mm WALL UNIT |
| 4 600mm BUILT UNDER OVEN HOUSING | 8 600mm BRIDGING UNIT |
| | 9 1000mm WALL UNIT |

All units are self-assembly. Other units available. Example includes items as stated and excludes worktops, plinths, panels, handles, sinks, taps, waste fittings, appliances and accessories.

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*IFC subject to acceptance and to UK residents only. Ask Instore for details. Written quotations available on request, ring 01132 471 471.
†Excludes kitchens from in-store stock. Kitchens included in the 1/3 off offer, kitchens from the Absolute, Banquet or Provence ranges and delivery costs (where applicable). Ask Instore for details.

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|--------------------|------------|
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Watch out, she's back
Lady Thatcher means trouble for the Tories

SHE just won't lie down, will she? Or perhaps it is simply truer to say that she can't. Former PMs are normally supposed to know their place in the appointed scheme of things. Not this one. Convention demands that they are only wheeled out on special formal occasions. But Lady Thatcher still craves the bear-pit and compulsively demands star billing when she returns.

factory and sneering, while the accolade for Michael Portillo's appalling party conference speech was gratuitous and in the circumstances highly provocative. And where, to go with the pats on the back for Messrs Clarke, Howard and Redwood, was the compliment for the First Secretary of State and Deputy Prime Minister? Clearly there are some things that you can never ask some girls to do.

A partial answer to the impasse
Sinn Fein's suggestion deserves a positive response

NORTHERN Ireland's long political impasse has been caused by two things: the British government's insistence on the handover of some IRA arms before all-party talks can begin, and the IRA's refusal to countenance any such thing, however it might be disguised. In a peace process which is supposed to be about talking and negotiating, the combined effect has been to prevent the very things which would best secure and extend the peace and which most people of goodwill both in Britain and Ireland want to see.

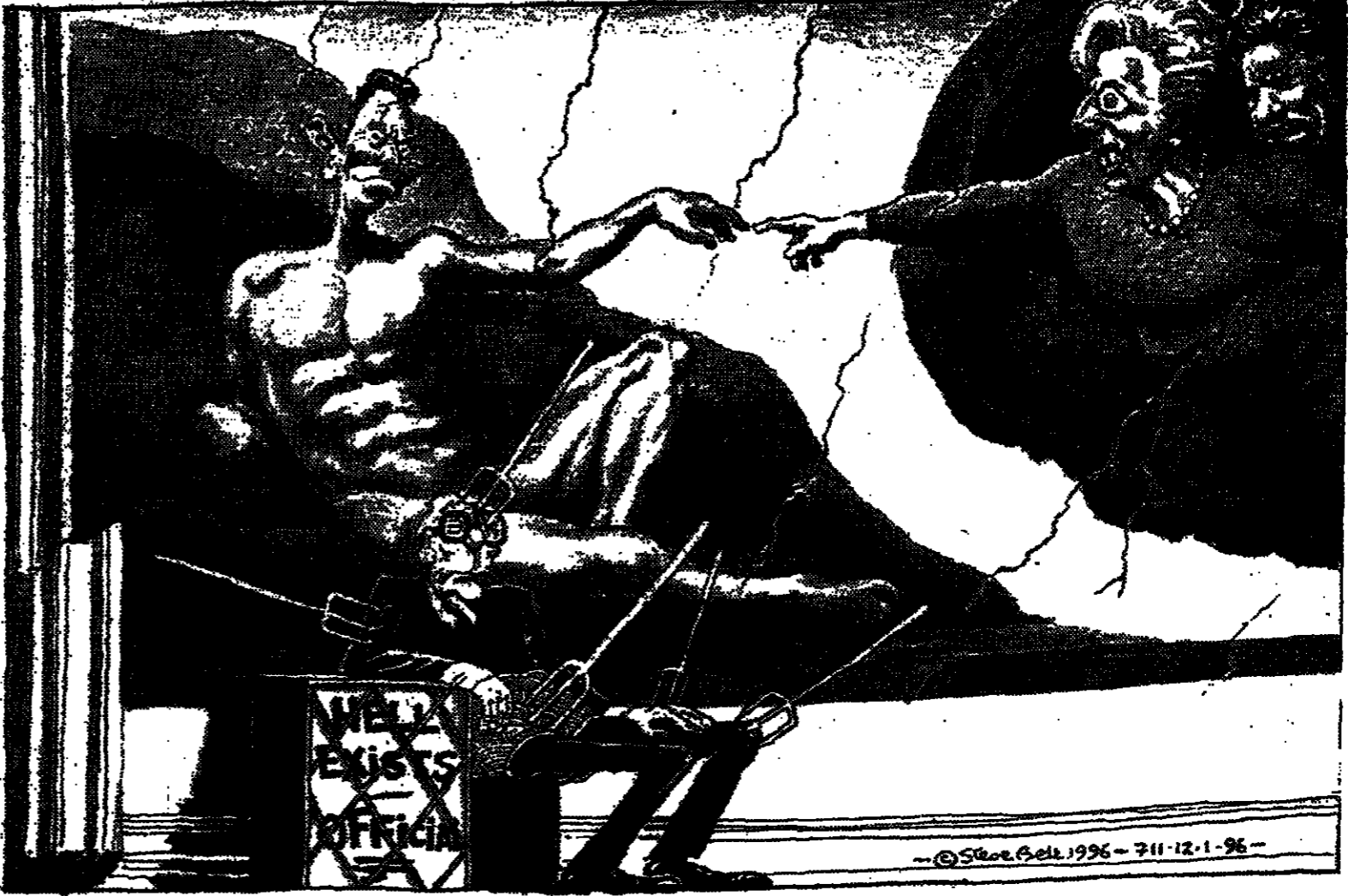
that London has been demanding. In particular it offers no hope of even a gesture on arms decommissioning in advance of all-party talks — the so-called "Washington Three" condition on which Britain still insists. It also, as the Democratic Unionists have pointed out, keeps in play Sinn Fein's democratically indefensible equation of legitimacy (i.e. army and police) arms and illegal, paramilitary weapons.

Blowing hot and cold over hell

Damnation, the final judgment is tormenting our minds again

THE DEVIL always has the best lines which is why a few cautious sentences in a new Church of England report have conjured up some fiery headlines. The report tackles the meaning of salvation in the modern world at a time when society has become much more pluralist and much less religious. How does it relate to such issues as the environment, discrimination and human rights? The Doctrine Commission has some good ideas but the report is not exactly an easy read. Page 199 comes as media manna, so to speak, from heaven. Here while rejecting the traditional hell with all its fiery trimmings it concludes that there is still a final judgment. As with most eschatology the argument is not all that clear. But the point seems to be that those who reject the force of love and friendship condemn themselves to a state of non-being which amounts to hell. So, "we believe in Hell," says the Church.

'The argument suits our present times. Hell is a familiar metaphor for cutting oneself off from all that should be valued in life. When we hope that Radovan Karadzic will rot in hell, we mean that he should be unable to live with his own conscience. When we say that war is hell, we are rejecting the notion that there is anything good or life-enhancing about it.'



Letters to the Editor

Gulf between allies and truth

ONE of the saddest truths of the Gulf war (Leader, January 11) is that the media industry has only just got round to realising there are truths still to be told. In March 1991 I filmed Edward Pearce, Paul Foot, John Pilger and Victoria British passionately exposing the horrific truth behind the "official lies" you consider necessary. We knew even then that Iraq troops were being Napalimed and buried alive and that civilians and critical infrastructure were being hit by a large proportion of the 98 per cent of bombs that weren't smart — but these, and a few other honourable exceptions, remained on the fringe.

A market comprehensively bucked

ONE argument for introducing selection into secondary education is that it is the only way to keep the middle class in the state sector, and happy to pay their taxes for so doing (Playing to win, January 10).

poor and transactions costs (eg as a result of changing schools) are high, making the exercise of choice very difficult. It is for these reasons that even the market-orientated OECD, in its 1995 report on the UK, was decidedly lukewarm as to whether the introduction of market-like processes into education by the Conservatives is sensible.

by the "coaching for tests" which some parents but not others were able to pay for. Second, however, the very concept of two kinds of educational species simply did not make sense. There are many kinds of talent and many ways in which intelligence might be developed.

fighting the battle of the 1960s. However, comprehensive schools now have control over their own budgets, a state-controlled curriculum, are effectively monitored and work in a target-conscious culture. The state publishes league tables and they show steady improvement. A transformation has taken place and Pollard hasn't noticed.

[WAS shocked to hear the truth about the dismal performance of the Patriot missile system against Iraqi Scuds. The original newsreels gave an impression of almost 100 per cent success — are there no advertising standards in this country any more?]

MAKE UP YOUR MIND! YOU DON'T LIKE COMPLETE PARTICIPATION AND YOU CAN'T STAND MY DONATION MILLER IMPERSONATION. Includes a cartoon of a man sitting at a desk with a sign that says 'THE BRAINS TRUST'.

Born free but in chains

PREVENTING escapes is the Home Secretary's paramount concern for prisoners (The shame I felt in chains, January 11). No one must ever be allowed to abscond again, no matter what the financial or human costs. It would simply be too politically embarrassing.

Parish news

THE loss of an odd bishop's palace (Leader, January 11), here or there, will make little impact on the Church of England's financial difficulties. What might be more significant given the inevitable and continued reduction in stipendiary ordained ministers, would be a proportional reduction in the number of dioceses, diocesan bishops and diocesan administrations.

Kids under remote control

WHEN my children were babies and preschoolers I always worked full-time. So I'm well aware that most babysitters and childminders use television as a constant background noise, which damages children's speech (TV exposure damages child speech, January 10).

A Country Diary

SOUTH WALES: The rendezvous smacked of the early novels of John le Carré. No passwords crossed our lips but at 7.40am on Christmas Eve on a slip road off the M4 just below Chepstow, a Renault 19 drew up beside me. "Follow me," said a voice from the passenger side window. So I did, and we wended our way in the half light before dawn to the shoulders of the Gray Hill, a bracken-covered mountain nine miles to the west of Chepstow. There we left the cars and climbed towards the peak of the Gray Hill. We were trying, unsuccessfully as it turned out, to observe the midwinter sunrise along a historically determined alignment in which a series of Bronze Age standing stones point to a notch on the horizon 23 miles away to the east. And if clear conditions prevail on or about the winter solstice the rising sun would have come up over the horizon in that distant notch. But at 8.13am — sunrise — mist and low cloud obscured the distant horizon. Dr Ivor Cavill, who had invited me to

Union broadcasts a warning

YOU report that the BBC's Arabic television service was censored by the Saudi-owned relay station in Rome (Major adds to Saudi turmoil, January 8). If the Government's plans are successful the whole of BBC Transmission, both domestic and World Service, will soon be privatised. All the BBC's output, not just uncomfortable news about Saudi dissidents, could be subject to both overt and covert censorship if BBC Transmission is sold into the private sector. Up to now, most eyes have been on Rupert Murdoch's ambitions, either through his satellite channels or his almost complete control over the decod-

Parish news

I AM a tenant of the Church Commissioners and have been recently informed by them that they wish to raise my rent by 25 per cent. It will be reassuring to the Bishop of Portsmouth to know that so many more of us will, along with him, help to recoup the Church's property losses. Noel Hanson, 14 Eastry House, Farringdon Road, London SW8.

سكان الامل

Diary Matthew Norman

In honour of her sublime defences of government policy towards Saudi dis-

Ask us twice and we'll join the union

Commentary Peter Preston

IT IS the very mead of modern Majorism. One jump, not two. What distresses me about the European debate...

sacred British opt-out, which allows us to choose what to do once the bird flaps its wings. Choosing may, or may not, be necessary. Such choice can be exercised by Westminster vote or referendum...

perhaps even a majority of nations — temporarily beached on the outside. Britain's negotiating triumph at Madrid was securing an expert examination of the effects of such a split...

Maastricht conditions. Here was a further small source of trouble and a possible future excuse for cooling on the whole operation...

His ministers have been talking as though there was some European alternative

Thus the expert play becomes, in reality, a commentary on the validity of the British position. We aren't in the Italian, or even Belgian, boat...

Hail Vivienne, queen of all our hearts

leather bustier to lend her a voluptuous-yet-caring look entirely suited to the nineties. But ever since the seventies, Vivienne has remained at the forefront of the social revolution...

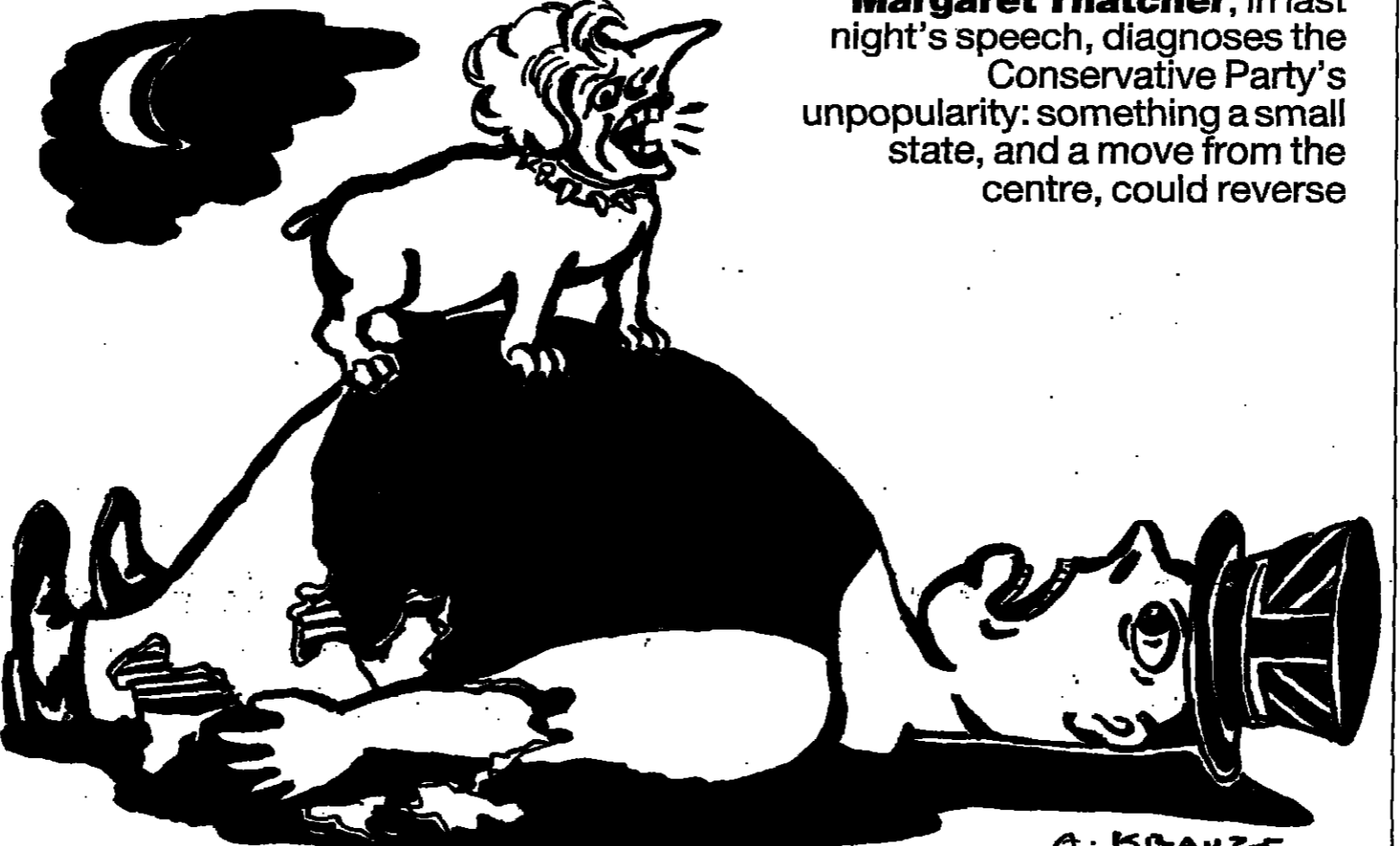


Bel Littlejohn

GRAT to see that Vivienne Westwood is getting some sort of hard-won recognition at last. Why is it we spare so little time in praising our home-grown fashion designers?

Have you noticed how, in newspapers, Vivienne Westwood is always confined to the fashion and feature pages? Yet there is so much that is overtly political in her work that by rights she should be featured alongside Helmut Kohl, Saddam Hussein, Jack Straw and President Clinton...

Margaret Thatcher, in last night's speech, diagnoses the Conservative Party's unpopularity: something a small state, and a move from the centre, could reverse



The common ground

THE kind of Conservatism which Keith Joseph and I favour would be best described as "liberal", in the old-fashioned sense. And I mean the liberalism of Mr Gladstone, not of the latter-day collectivists...

importance of custom, convention, tradition, belief, national institutions or what the ancient Romans would describe as "piety". Nor do we dispute that the bonds of society need ultimately to be guaranteed by the state. It is Marxists, not Conservatives, who imagined — or at least pretended to imagine — that the state would wither away...

the electorate is at present inclined to send us. I believe that this would be ill-judged on their part. The Conservative Party still has much to offer. And from Mr Blair's New — or not so new — Labour Party there is much to fear...

scribed as "No Nation Conservatism". And certainly anyone who believes that salvation is to be found further away from the basic Conservative principles which prevailed in the eighties — small government, a property-owning democracy, tax cuts, deregulation and national sovereignty — is profoundly mistaken...

a doubling of voluntary giving to good causes. Moreover, though we made a mistake of financial management by allowing the economy to overheat and inflation to rise towards the end of that period, the general advance of prosperity was solidly based upon real economic improvements.

a hugely encouraging men for New Labour, the great Dennis Skinner having behind the philosophy of "state socialism". He pinned a group of miners' MPs on a visit to Mr Tony Blair's office earlier this week, to argue for stronger commitments of help to form pit communities. Ever the gentleman, Mr Blair asked his visitors if they would like a cup of tea. "Yes please," said Mr Skinner, "and I'll have a sirloin with mine."

Orchestrated campaign of unparalleled wickedness forces me to take my friend Paul Johnson under the Diary's protective wing. This week's issue of the Spectator carries no fewer than seven letters — including one from Lord Longford — attacking last week's article, ghost-written for Mr Johnson by Paul George when writing his block struck, on why "the hussers" like John Major. To all of you, and especially to you, Nicholas Jones of Fillington (who wonders if "in his repetitive and grudgingly tedious homophobia" Mr Johnson protests just a little too much"), I will say only this: Paul may not be able to look after himself, but one more malicious, impertinent word on the subject, and Boris the Jackal Johnson will be released from his cage. You have been warned.

AT Westminster, there is concern that the office responsible for their Lordships' security documents is not competent to cope with the workload, following the issuing of a full pass to a dog. The pass has a small photograph of the animal, which belongs to an unnamed peer, and the identification reference "EG". Plans to add a new "secret" were abandoned due to lack of space on the pass.

THERE are rumours that Mr John Birt has contrived another master stroke. This time, says an anonymous BBC source, it's something called... wait for it... the Efficiency Vision Office. A power structure designed for Mr Birt and management consultants McKinnon and "secretaries" something or other. Its existence has so far been impossible to confirm. The corporate press office denies having heard of it, while one distinguished BBC TV presenter was by sight. "It's news to me, but it sounds like the usual sort of bollocks. Nothing would surprise me any more. Nothing." Anyone with information about the Efficiency Vision Office, its philosophy and workings is invited to share it with the Diary.

HATS off to the Press Association for a rare and surprising attempt at transparency. Yesterday's record omnibus seizure was made the news agency report, "during a joint operation between police and customs officers".

I DON'T BELIEVE THAT THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND EXISTS. Let me remind you why. Creativity is necessarily a quality which pertains to individuals. Indeed, perhaps the one immutable law of anthropology is that we are all different. Now, of course, individuals can't fulfil their potential without a society in which to do so. I have never minimised the importance of society, only contested the assumption that society means the state rather than other people. Conservatives do not take an extreme atomistic view of society. We need no lectures about the

ely bucked

but in chains

Diary

SALE Les soldes at Roche-Boobis. It is truly the ideal time to furnish one's home at greatly reduced prices. Leather or fabric sofas, bedrooms, accessories... and more! ROCHE BOOBIS PARIS EUROPEAN INTERIORS 421/425 Finchley Road, Hampstead London NW3 6HJ. Phone: 071-431 14 11. Free parking.

Racing
Dublin bulldozes way to Gold Cup

Graham Rick
DUBLIN FLYER galloped his way towards the Cheltenham Gold Cup with an emphatic victory in the John Bull Chase at Wetherby...

That's what we've done since.
Dublin Flyer is a best-placed 2-1 for the Gold Cup with Corles, 12-1 with Lord Brokes and Hill's, and heads the market for the Martell Grand National at 16-1.

Another impressive winner yesterday was Scott Banks in the Monkton Handicap Chase at Wetherby. He completed a double for Peter Easterby, who announced that his son, Tim, will be taking over the reins of the stable...



Sitting pretty... Lorcan Wyer and Scott Banks track back on the first circuit on the way to winning yesterday's Monkton Chase at Wetherby.

Sport in brief
Blundell misses out on place with Tyrrell

TYRRELL-YAMAHA yesterday confirmed Ukyo Katayama as one of their drivers for the coming season, virtually ending Mark Blundell's hopes of continuing his Formula 1 career...

Syed's winning comeback
MATTHEW SYED, a game down and 16-1 in the second, recovered to beat the Swiss champion Thierry Muller for his third win in the Olympic table tennis qualifying competition at Manchester...

Electric tests for bowler
SRI LANKA have called on a Hong Kong-based professor and his electrical wizardry to decide once and for all whether the off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan throws or bowls...

King second to 'queen'
BRITAIN'S Jaime King finished second as China's Han Xue broke her own world record in the women's 50 metres breaststroke in a World Cup series event in Beijing yesterday...

Cash 'paid to Graf's father'
Steffi Graf's father Peter demanded and received large sums of money as payment for her tournament victories, a German Tennis Association official, Gunter Sanders, told a panel in Stuttgart...

Ascot runners and riders with form guide

Table listing Ascot runners and riders with form guides. Includes columns for race number, runner name, and rider name.

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Musselburgh

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Southwell (AW Flat)

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Osborne booked

FRANCOIS DOUMEN has booked Jamie Osborne for So Far Bold in tomorrow's Peter Ross Novice Chase at Ascot. Doumen tends to use his own jockeys in ventures to Britain, but Osborne has intimated that should things go well he would stick with So Far Bold in his preparation races for the Sun Alliance at Cheltenham.

Results

Table listing race results from various tracks. Includes columns for race name, runner name, and rider name.

Wetherby

Table listing race results from Wetherby. Includes columns for race name, runner name, and rider name.

Lingfield

Table listing race results from Lingfield. Includes columns for race name, runner name, and rider name.

Doncaster

Table listing race results from Doncaster. Includes columns for race name, runner name, and rider name.

Carlisle

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Windsor

Table listing race results from Windsor. Includes columns for race name, runner name, and rider name.

Worcester

Table listing race results from Worcester. Includes columns for race name, runner name, and rider name.

Advertisement for RACELINE FULL SERVICE, featuring phone numbers and contact information for various racing services.

Soccer

David Lacey says the sub-committee set up to advise the international committee should commit itself to recommending little change

Venables' line of succession

THE appointment of a new man to run the England team should be a seamless process but rarely is. England managers and coaches are judged by results, and when the results are unsatisfactory there is a desire for a clean break with what has gone before.

No amount of invisible mending will hide the disruption to the evolutionary process of the present England team that is bound to follow the decision of Terry Venables to stand down after the European Championship in June. His successor will be thrust straight into the 1998 World Cup qualifiers, having the usual four-year cycle of England management. Time is on nobody's side.

Yet in one respect the Football Association is in a stronger position than usual. For while Venables attempts to lead England to their first major international honour

since 1966, he will also provide Lancaster Gate with an opportunity it would be unwise to ignore.

The FA does not have to do anything radical. Venables may not be taking England into the next World Cup but this is surely no reason to dismantle a coaching structure the creation of which has been his most valuable achievement so far.

Bryan Robson is already established as Venables's No. 2 and would not be there if the FA did not believe that eventually he would be a leading contender for the England job. Don Howe, England's most experienced coach, served under Ron Greenwood and Bobby Robson and is quasi-technical director until the FA gets around to making a proper appointment.

Bryan Robson said last night that he intended completing his contract with Middlesbrough, but this hardly rules him out for the future.

He can still work with Howe to give the FA the best chance of ensuring the continuity which will be vital when England begin their World Cup programme.

Kevin Keegan, another refusenik as Venables's successor, should also stay on board in charge of the Under-21 squad. Whoever the next coach turns out to be, abolishing the present set-up would be a backward step.

The importance of maintaining a strong thread was emphasised by Graham Kelly, the FA's chief executive, when Venables's impending departure was announced on Wednesday. "Continuity is a major factor in international success," he said, "and one doesn't want to be chopping and changing philosophies, styles, systems and approaches on a regular basis."

The same was true when Ron Greenwood, who managed England from 1977 to 1982, established a manage-

ment structure similar to that which is available to the FA now. Bobby Robson was next in line and behind him came Venables.

Robson's appointment, following Greenwood's retirement after the 1982 World Cup, remains the smoothest transfer of power so far, yet the FA missed an opportunity fully to exploit the system that had been created. Now it has a second chance, provided the cobwebs of commitment do not obscure the issue.

The most depressing words to fall from Kelly's lips on Wednesday concerned the time-scale of appointing the next England coach. "It will begin fairly soon," said Kelly carefully. "It will go through the normal method of a sub-committee handling the situation." If ever the FA abolishes sub-committees, No. 16 Lancaster Gate will probably fall down, so deeply are they embedded in the brickwork.

The sub-committee that

chose Venables comprised Sir Bert Millichip, the FA chairman, Noel White, the chairman of the international committee, and Ian Stott, a member of the same committee. Advising them were Kelly, Jimmy Armfield — who had recommended Venables after sounding out managers



Kelly... through it again

and coaches — and Rick Parry, the Premier League's chief executive.

A similar sub-committee will similarly have to make recommendations to be approved by the international committee this time. The FA's decision-making process remains cumbersome.

Unwisely, Kelly responded to doubts about England's chances this summer, in the light of Venables's decision, by quoting the example of Denmark, the present European champions, whose coach Richard Moller Nielsen will also be going once the tournament is over. "Nobody suggests that their chances are diminished or harmed in any way," he argued.

A principal reason for this, however, is that once Nielsen, who is taking over Finland, had announced his intentions the Danes appointed Bo Johansson to succeed him in roughly the time it takes the FA to set up a sub-committee.

Newcastle fail to make Papin talk of the Toon

NEWCASTLE UNITED will have to come up with a better offer if they want to sign Jean-Pierre Papin, the 1991 European Player of the Year.

Papin had hoped to escape the bench at Bayern Munich to play a part in United's title challenge convincing enough to earn him a place in the European Championship this summer. Kevin Keegan had offered to take the 32-year-old international striker on loan. But Bayern yesterday quashed both parties' hopes.

A spokesman for the Bavarian club said: "Newcastle approached us indicating they would like to take Papin on loan until the end of the season. We have said no as we may need him as cover."

The French daily L'Equipe reported yesterday that Keegan had inquired about Papin. "He is an interesting, class footballer and I like him," the manager said. Papin said: "I am crossing the fingers of both hands. It would be great to sign for Newcastle."

Marc Hottiger's proposed transfer was also on the verge of collapse last night. Although the Swiss international defender met the Ever-

ton manager Joe Royle yesterday afternoon they were unable to agree on personal terms. "Marc has gone back to Newcastle because the deal is deadlocked at the moment," said Royle.

The Dynamo Moscow midfielder Igor Dobrovolski, a Russian international valued at around £500,000, is likely to join Everton on trial for two weeks.

Interazionale's search for a foreign striker may begin with Alan Shearer, the Premier League's top scorer. "We are closely pursuing top attackers," the Inter Milan president Massimo Moratti told Gazzetta dello Sport. "There are many alternatives. One of the most interesting, for example, is Shearer."

Dunfermline players have decided to play tomorrow's game against Clydebank at East End Park even though the funeral of their captain Norris McCathie will not take place until Tuesday. As a mark of respect McCathie's No. 4 shirt will not be used. The bodies of McCathie, 34, and Amanda Burns, 26, were found at his cottage on Monday.

Premier League officials met representatives of the European Commission yesterday and agreed to set up a forum to discuss the full implications of the Bosman case.

Paul Weaver on an unusual press conference for a couple of unlikely recruits to the Mick McCarthy cause

Russian Tank rolls up for a Millwall welcome

MILLWALL provided full instructions and a detailed map of their training ground on Bromley Hill — and that was for the benefit of London-based football writers. Heaven knows how Sergei Yuran and Vasilii Kulkov found the place.

But there they were, sitting with expressions of patient bewilderment either side of their serene-looking manager Mick McCarthy and their interpreter behind a dining table in south-east London: two of Spartak Moscow's finest, genuine international-class footballers with 74 appearances between them for the Soviet Union, the CIS and Russia.

With Millwall in their post new stadium in Berrymsey, the good old had old days of Cold Blow Lane recede apace. What would Harry Crippes have made of it? "Crippes, Russkie" perhaps — and then he would have given them a beaming smile and invited them home for a cup of tea.

They looked as though they needed one. "To be fair," explained McCarthy, "the two lads weren't too keen on doing a press conference. They feel a bit embarrassed. They would rather have done it after the Port Vale game on Saturday."

A few football writers were not keen either. Interpreters have an analgesic influence on the spoken word. For all we knew they might have said, "Actually, we are of the opinion that Millwall is a complete dump and you British cannot play football," but we didn't get any of it.

Oh yes, they were settling down nicely thank you and really looking forward to playing and Millwall was a wonderful club. When they signed last week, did Yuran really mean to say, "We have played for some great clubs in Europe but this is the pinnacle of our careers?"



The Glums... Yuran (left) and Kulkov are glad to be here and McCarthy is pleased to have them, despite the expressions PHOTOGRAPH: TOM JENKINS

It certainly represents a peak for McCarthy, unless he told them he was manager of Manchester United. Yuran, a forward, and the defender-midfielder Kulkov have passed the chance to play in the European Cup by signing for Millwall on loan until the end of the season.

Premiership clubs would have killed to get their hands on this pair. Yuran, 26, has

scored 59 goals from 154 club appearances and eight from 29 internationals. He helped Benfica destroy Arsenal in the 1991-92 European Cup and last season, for Spartak, managed three, including the winner at Blackburn, as his club topped the Champions' League Group B. "My nickname is The Tank," he grinned.

Kulkov, 28, has made 45 international appearances and

is renowned for the skill of his passing. Between them they should revive Millwall's faltering promotion drive.

But why Millwall? "There were other clubs but Millwall made a specific offer and it is a promising club with a future. Yes, we had heard of Millwall. We knew they had an American goalkeeper," said Yuran. The only problem so far had been driving on the

other side of the road. Great mates, these. They were together at Benfica and Porto before joining Spartak last year. "My only problem was keeping the whole deal quiet," said McCarthy. "There were other clubs coming in at the end."

Language? Put it this way, said McCarthy, "we haven't had any in-depth discussions yet. The big boards

we have in dressing rooms are handy but I'm not sure how to get over the 'F' word."

There could be more serious problems ahead. Football stands are full of raging xenophobes of the Portillo persuasion, as David Ginola discovered at Arsenal on Wednesday night. "I hope there will be no problems but a lot depends on your personality," said Yuran, sounding very wise for a tank.

Jess looks for quick move south

JOHN JESS made himself available to prospective buyers in England yesterday when he turned down a new contract which was the best ever offered to an Aberdeen player.

The international striker or midfielder was assessed by Kenny Dalgleish, Blackburn's director of football, in Aberdeen's 2-1 win over Hills last Monday and has been watched seven times this season by Liverpool's Ron Yeats.

Aberdeen have also had an inquiry from Chelsea and last season Joe Royle of Everton declared an interest. Jess was not at his best then but has since recovered the form that brought him eight caps.

"At 25, I feel I sign another contract with Aberdeen I'll be too old to go," said Jess, whose current deal expires at the end of June. "I'd like to go to England sooner rather than later because it would be better to be settled before the European Championship finals."

Peter van Vossen, the former Ajax, Anderlecht and Holland striker, arrived at Ibrox last night for talks which seem likely to end with his signing for Rangers today.

The 27-year-old Dutchman, who joined Istanbulspor last summer, is likely to join the Glasgow club in a swap involving Oleg Salenko, the Russian striker who has disappointed since leaving Valencia for Rangers for £2.3 million this season.

Sullivan eyes chance of a second city final

ARSENAL and Aston Villa, both of whom have impressive records in the Coca-Cola Cup, were paired together in the semi-finals of the competition when the draw was made at Wembley Stadium yesterday.

Leeds United, the other Premiership side through to the semi-finals, will face a First Division side in Norwich or Birmingham, who must replay their quarter-final after a 1-1 draw at Carrow Road on Wednesday night.

Villa, who beat Manchester United in the 1994 final and accounted for Arsenal on the way, will be making their 10th appearance in the semi-finals, and the London side, winners in 1987 and 1993, are through to this stage for the eighth time. Norwich were winners 11 years ago.

But Birmingham will be confident of beating the Norfolk side in their replay and their colourful owner David Sullivan is savouring the possibility of a "second city" final against Villa, albeit at Wembley.

Sullivan believes City's chances of beating Howard Wilkinson's side over two legs are greater than if they had been paired with Villa or Arsenal. "It's great from our point of view and the chance of playing Villa in the final is unbelievable," he said. "But we still have to overcome Norwich and that will not be easy."

DISPATCH: Arsenal v Aston Villa; Norwich or Birmingham v Leeds. First legs February 11 and 14; second legs February 21 and 25.

Tennis

Rusedski marches on but other Britons fail to qualify

GREG RUSEDKI, Britain's No. 1, maintained his fine form in the run-up to next week's Australian Open with a 6-4, 4-6, 6-3 victory over Scott Draper of Australia in the quarter-finals of the Peters International in Sydney.

The unseeded Rusedski will now face the fifth-seeded American Todd Martin, and

the top seed Goran Ivanisevic, who overcame Mark Woodforde, 6-4, 7-5, will play Woodforde's long-time doubles partner, Todd Woodbridge.

There was a more familiar story in Melbourne, where all three British men attempting to qualify for the Open fell at the first hurdle. Andrew Richardson lost 6-3,

6-2 to the American Steve Campbell, Danny Sapsford was beaten 6-4, 6-3 by the Italian Diego Nargiso, and Nick Baglin went down 7-5, 6-3 to Takao Suzuki of Japan.

Another Briton, Chris Wilkinson, missed a chance of a quarter-final place at the Indonesian Open in Jakarta when he retired from his

match against Paul Haarhuis with dehydration. The Dutchman was 3-0 up in the second set, having won the first 6-1.

Monika Seles survived a barrage from the hard-hitting South African Mariaan de Swardt, ranked 37 in the world, to advance to the semi-finals of the Peters International 6-3, 6-2.

Boxing

World-title fight is off again as Hamed undergoes hand surgery

NASEEM HAMED has undergone hand surgery after twice having to postpone his first World Boxing Organisation featherweight title defence.

"He is very upset," said his trainer Brendan Ingle, "but it is just one of those things. There is too much at stake to risk it."

First scheduled for last month, Hamed's London Arena contest against the Mexican Arnulfo Castillo was postponed to February 10 but yesterday the 21-year-old Sheffield fighter underwent keyhole surgery to his right hand in a London clinic to repair damage sustained in taking the title

from the Welshman Steve Robinson.

"It is a worry," his promoter Frank Warren admitted. "Three bones are fused together and need to be separated, but the doctor says it is not career-threatening and we are hoping he could be back in the ring in a month or so. I can't think

of any big puncher who has not had problems with his hands."

Warren is now trying to arrange a new top-of-the-bill fight for his show, which includes the British cruiserweight title rematch between Dennis Andries and the holder Terry Dunstan.

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Cricket

South Africa v England: second one-day international

Resolute Atherton lifts the gloom

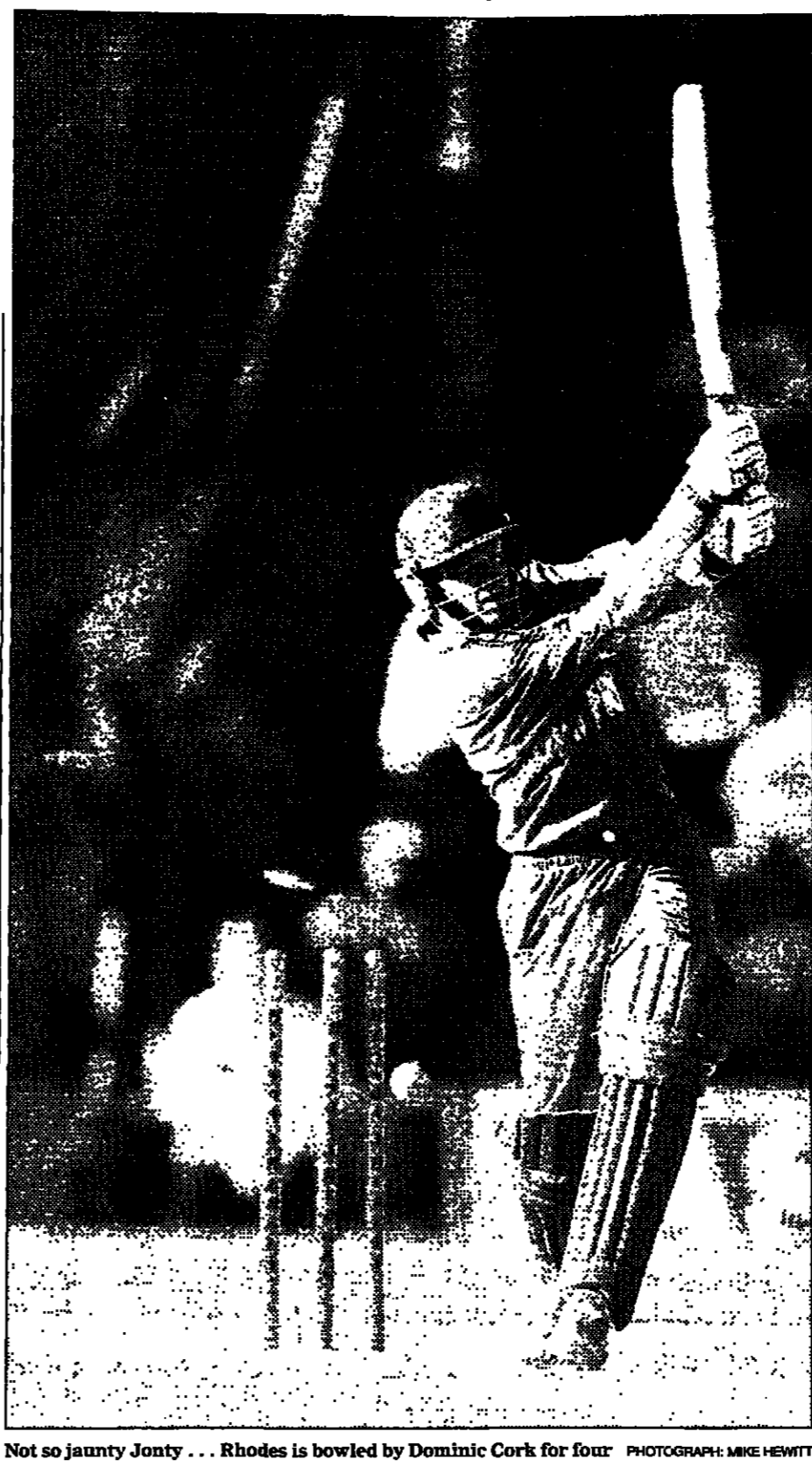
Mike Selvey sees England win an interrupted run-chase in Bloemfontein

ENGLAND survived an ordeal by heat and temperament and the disruption of a flood...

Scoreboard

Table with columns for South Africa and England, listing players and their scores.

ing and an electrician fixed it inside 40 minutes. South Africa, with a revamped batting order...



Not so jaunty Jonty... Rhodes is bowled by Dominic Cork for four

Rugby Union

Twickenham faces ire from the shires

Robert Armstrong on the backlash to the RFU's plans for a professional game

TWICKENHAM'S headlong rush towards professionalism has provoked a backlash up and down the country...

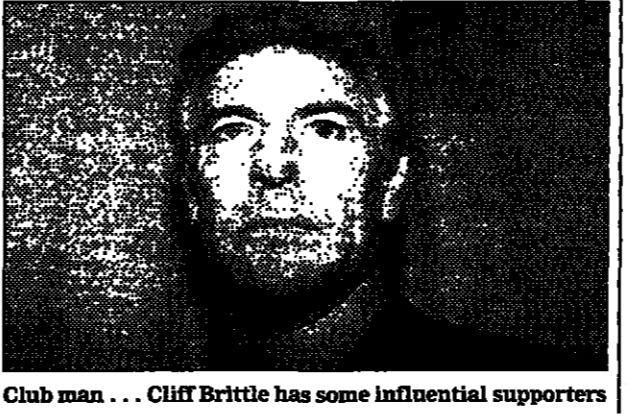
position situated halfway between Lord and Jeavons-Fellows, who is a shrewd propagandist for open rugby...

as a member of the "old guard" but Brittle certainly does not belong to that category.

they also provide the opportunity for anyone, whatever size or shape, to play and enjoy the game.

France recall suspended trio

FRANCE have recalled the three players they suspended for last November's two-match series against the All Blacks...



Club man... Cliff Brittle has some influential supporters

Athletics

New security for BAF

Stephen Bierley THE British Athletic Federation, having had the flood run out on it, yesterday locked itself into a new sponsor.

One must hope that the federation looks after security rather more assiduously than it did KP.

Results

Table listing results for various sports including Soccer, Tennis, Biathlon, Hockey, Ice Hockey, Snooker, Squash, and Rugby League.



Extra time Edited by Jeremy Alexander

Top US skater spins out of focus

SUBJECT to an outbreak of Harding Bar Knee Syndrome, a male skater will be the focus of attention at the United States national championships next week.

Sixth column

THE Florida High School Activities Association will decide tomorrow whether to reinstate the Gulliver Preparatory School girls to third place in the 4A division of the state cross-country championships in Jacksonville in November.

THE referee Gerald Ashby got off lightly from the frayed tempers at Highbury on Wednesday. In Italy on Sunday Marco Ruffanelli - no homer, some hope - sent off three Fiesole players, including the goalkeeper, and booked another four in a match won 2-0 by the visitors.

WHILE Rusedski marches on in Sydney, his first round victim, the second seed Richard Krajicek, made the best of his defeat. The Colonial Classic started in Melbourne a day later: Sampras, suffering from flu, predictably withdrew; the Dutchman, having missed out on \$25,000 in Sydney (the difference between title and first-round defeat), gallantly and conveniently replaced him.

SALLY GUNNELL denied a proper season by injury last year, was working nonetheless on improving her Olympic chances this summer. With Belei she was heading to the finer points of the sporting bra. Figures show: 10 million women exercise regularly; 19 per cent wear no bra; 77 per cent do not wear a sports one; 57 per cent had not thought of it; and 80 per cent of GPs believe a special bra reduces breast motion and the stress on Cooper's suspensory ligaments, delaying long-term sag.

MID-PRESS yesterday the Press Association stopped filing reports on the Queen Mother national squash championships in Epsom and started filing them on the QM national championships. The sponsor is QM, Birmingham racket-maker.

Gunnell... support role

Leading jockey injured in hurdle fall, page 13

France pick 'rebels' to face England, page 15

Millwall parade their Russians, page 14

Athletics nets £2m sponsorship, page 15

SportsGuardian

ATHERTON SPARKS REVIVAL AFTER THE LIGHTS GO OUT IN BLOEMFONTEIN

England come out of the shadows

BLOEMFONTEIN may have suffered complete power failure yesterday, but for once England's batsmen did not, writes Jack Massarik.

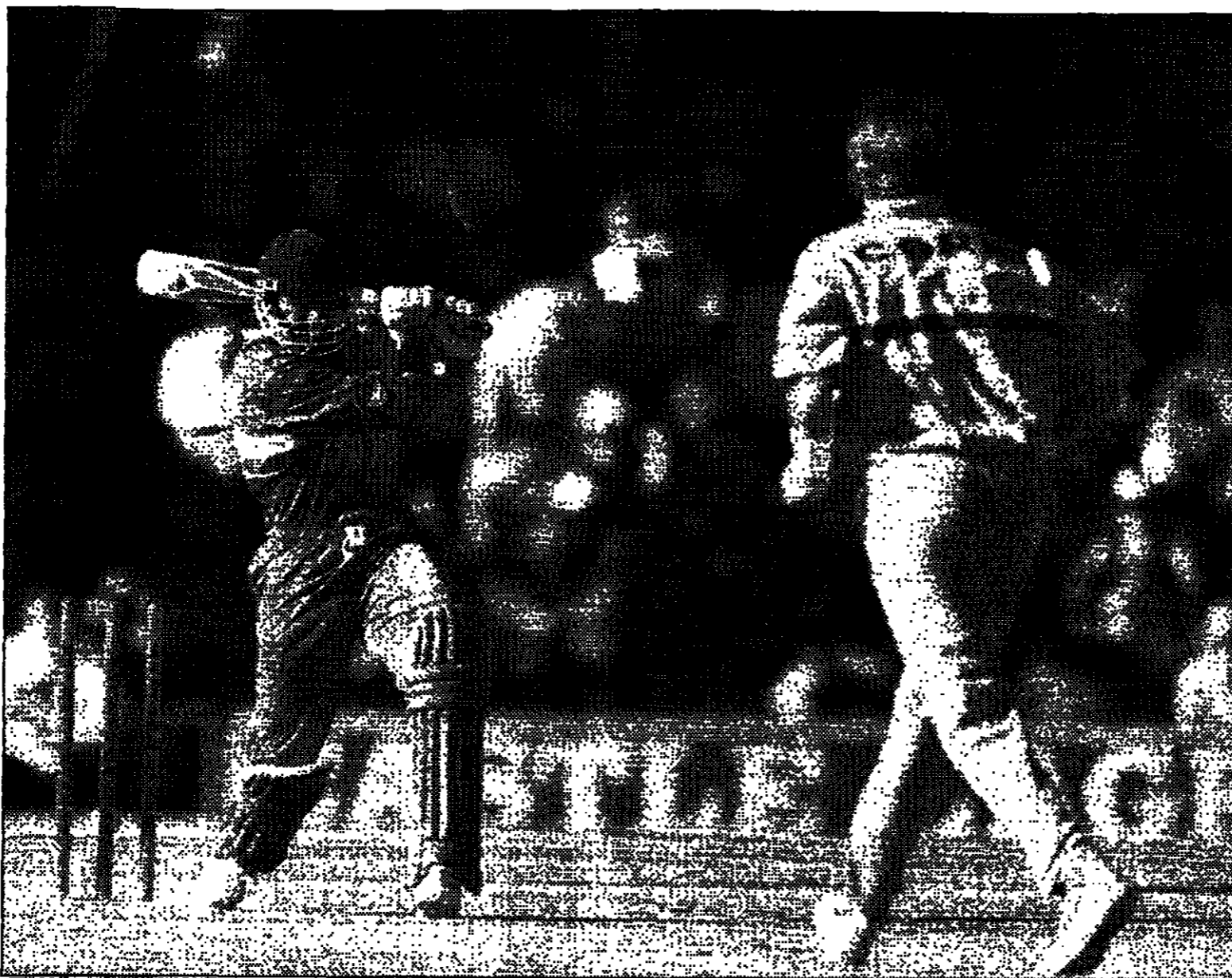
Making light, so to speak, of a 40-minute break when darkness stopped play, they returned to overhaul South Africa's 262 for eight and win the second one-day international by five wickets, levelling the series at 1-1.

It was in the 23rd over of England's innings, with Atherton and Thorpe at the wicket, that the floodlights failed — a setback that recalled the ready wit of Sir Alf Ramsey when something similar once happened at Fortman Road.

"How long do you think they'll take to fix them?" a flanneling Jimmy Hill desperately asked his commentary-box colleague. "Ah hem not an electrician," was Alf's helpful reply.

Here the power supply to the whole area had failed, and had it not been restored the match would have been declared a draw, because England were still eight balls short of the 25 overs stipulated before a win may be decided by wicket-fall or scoring rate.

Match report, page 15



Skittled out... Dominic Cork shatters Hansie Cronje's stumps to strike a middle-order blow for England against South Africa PHOTOGRAPH: MIKE HEWITT

Wavy line that tempts Wigan to Twickenham



Frank Keating

IF WIGAN rugby league club do pick up the gauntlet and enter a team at Twickenham's Middlessex Sevens in May, it will be both a voluptuous gesture of reconciliation to mark the end of the 100 years' war and, at a stroke, an answer to the fevered but hitherto untested tap-room debate of a century about the quality of the codes.

Imagine the drama if Wigan played in the final against the England RU seven, who have applied to the tournament for a late entry as they seek meaningful competition in the abbreviated game in preparation to defend next year in Hong Kong the world title they won at Murrayfield three years ago.

The Middlessex Sevens celebrates its 70th birthday this year, so it should be even more of an end-of-term middle-class boozers' carnival than usual. But if it pitted Wigan against England for quarter of an hour, no one would dare lift a hip-flask to his lips for fear of missing something. Imagine the match-ups: Underwood v Offiah, Carling v Connolly, Guscott v Tulgamala, Clarke v Quinlan.

Even as Wigan were making up their minds this week, their chief executive Brian Pickup said, with challenging resonance: "We always enter every competition to win it, so we would select the strongest possible squad available to us."

Prescott, for many years thereafter defender of the faith as secretary of the RFU at Twickenham.

The man who was to succeed him in that post, the then Fit Lt R G H Weighill, played wing forward that springtime afternoon, which brought the Rugby League men victory by 15-10. Within a year the Capt and Fit Lt retired behind their drawbridge, never again to occupy the same playing field as subordinates from the Rugby League.

Yet at the lunch before that 1944 match, its organiser Capt Stanley Wilson of Northern Command had made "an earnest plea for the playing of an annual Union League match in the hope of eventually healing the breach".

"In my view," Wilson continued, "the line between amateurism and professionalism is the most wavy line that has ever been drawn." It was to remain so for another half-century, more and more wavy but enduring all the same.

THERE was also an enforced amnesty during the first world war, one that was too long extended by one Welsh village.

Thus it happened that in 1923, in a union game between Morriston and Cwmilyfell, the referee stopped play and abandoned the match after five minutes when he learned that Billo Rees, home on holiday from playing rugby league for Swinton, was enjoying the game.

Both clubs were suspended for a month by the WRU in consequence.

Nor could Twickenham stop league men infecting their sanctity during National Service duty back in the 1950s and early 1960s, most famously at Grange Road, Cambridge.

It was there that the celebrated bundle of belligerence, young Alex Murphy, was selected at fly-half for the RAF to mark the redoubtable M J K Smith for the "Union Select XV". First tackle, Murphy crash-lands on the whole pack of initials.

"Hey, steady on there, Murphy, this is rugged, old boy, not an organised execution," says the clipped Winco who is captaining the RAF. After treatment, M J K is immediately given the ball again, to be met simultaneously by another stupendous Murphy tackle.

"Look here, stop this at once, Murphy," orders Winco. "Don't you realise Mr Smith is due to play at Twickers on Saturday?"

Replies Murphy: "He won't even be playing ruddy dominos on Saturday if he tries to link past me like that again!"

Francis the new favourite

Martin Thorpe finds Kevin Keegan and Bryan Robson less than enthusiastic about taking over from Terry Venables this summer

KEVIN KEEGAN and Bryan Robson, the two leading candidates to replace Terry Venables as England coach, appeared to rule themselves out of the succession yesterday, insisting they would be staying with their clubs.

Bookmakers immediately installed the Tottenham manager Gerry Francis as the 6-4 favourite.

The Football Association will now have to decide

whether these pledges of loyalty are unequivocal or merely soccer etiquette. Certainly Keegan's views seemed the more steadfast.

"I am interested in managing nobody but Newcastle United," he said yesterday. His chairman Sir John Hall, who would fight hard against his manager moving, then put Keegan on his honour by responding: "The club is delighted with his further commitment to our future."

Robson's pledge to Middles-

sex-up, the former national captain would offer the FA the continuity and calm transition it is seeking for the 1998 World Cup qualifying campaign which begins in September.

"That will be one of the major factors when we sort the situation out," acknowledged the FA's chief executive Graham Kelly. And the International Committee member Ian Stott, whose criticisms played a part in Venables' decision to quit, also alluded to Robson when he said his choice of successor was someone "currently involved in the England set-up".

If Keegan and Robson prove immune to an FA plea that "your country needs you", then Francis would be an admirable alternative, with the advantage that he operates without a contract at Tottenham; his only pledge to them

is that he will stay until the end of this season.

Two things seem certain about the succession, however. The next England manager is unlikely to be a foreigner. "We've always been reluctant to go outside England," said Kelly. And it will not be Ray Wilkins. "I am not experienced enough for all that," he said. "I have a big job at QPR and want to stay and finish that." Unless that was soccer etiquette too.

One intriguing possibility has still not been totally ruled out: a change of mind by Venables. Fuel for this theory was provided by Jimmy Armfield, the FA's special adviser who will help in the search for a coach. Yesterday he said: "I still think a lot can happen between now and July."

David Lacey, page 14



Keegan... staying put



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Highbury pair face FA charge

BRUCE RIOCH and Terry McDermott face a charge of bringing the game into disrepute, after Wednesday's touchline bust-up at Highbury, writes Martin Thorpe.

The fact that what the linesman describes as "an aggressive verbal confrontation" was seen by a live television audience may force the Football Association to take action even though there was no physical contact between the Arsenal manager and the Newcastle No.2 during their stand-up row, described later as "handbags-at-five-paces stuff — the sort of thing that can happen in the heat of the moment during a game" by the Newcastle manager Kevin Keegan.

Rioch and McDermott have 14 days to give the FA their views of the incident, which followed David Ginola's red card for elbowing Lee Dixon in a pulsating Coca-Cola quarter-final, won 2-0 by Arsenal. The match referee Gerald Ashby was also ordered to

submit an instant report.

The police, who went into the referee's room after the game, will not be taking any action. The incident is understood to have been discussed at an Arsenal board meeting yesterday.

If charged and found guilty, Rioch and McDermott would face fines and/or touchline bans. Rioch admitted he lost his temper after McDermott allegedly said: "You've punched a few players in your career."

The referee has confirmed he sent Ginola off for the elbowing alone and not as the result of a second yellow card. Keegan intends to appeal against the earlier booking.

Ginola, who will now have to serve a three-match ban, is one booking away from a further two-match ban. Keegan expressed concern that these problems could persuade the Frenchman to leave Newcastle. "He's very down," said Keegan. "I would hate to lose him."

Guardian Crossword No 20,547

Set by Mercury

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| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
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| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |

Across

1 It's pointless John taking a month to find Mary's husband (6)

4 Mum copies forms (6)

9 Vista in Blenheim (anagram) (3,9,3)

10 Loves to include Verdi, not one to exaggerate (6)

11 892 12

12, 11, 15 Man hopes to get to his chef (anagram) (3,5,2,6,2,4)

14 Worked hard to get model tipsy (6)

15 See 12

18 Having car and no money one abandoned self-government (8)

21 Tyrant rejected policeman, thanks to Hill (8)

Down

1 Have Jack standing around Head Office — people worship him (7)

2 One may be going downhill fast (5)

3 Friend takes five eggs and a cake (7)

5 Something nurse wear at home, naturally (7)

6 Summary plus something charged for accuracy (8)

7 It's shiny and leaves pan gleaming inside (7)

8 Held by a girl or out of the sea (6)

CROSSWORD SOLUTION 20,546

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Solution tomorrow

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